

[illegible]

AND OF

THE LOW COUNTRIES.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "HIGHWAYS AND BY-WAYS,"

ETC.

— — —
" All thynges in this Boke that ye shall rede,
Doc as ye lyst, there shall no manne you binde
Them to beleue as surely as your crede ;
But, notwithstandynge, certes in my mynde,
I durst well swere, as true ye shall them fynde,
In euery poynt eche answer by and by,
As are the iudgmentes of astrologye." SIR THOMAS MORE.

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PREFACE.

THE following stories were gathered from various sources, and some of them freely adapted from the literature of the countries where the scenes are laid. Brabant and Flanders, so fertile in subjects of romantic history, and of which the author has availed himself in previous productions, have furnished materials for some of those included in the present publication. The "*Bijdragen tot het oude Strafrecht in Belgie*," and the "*Chroniques et Traditions Surnaturelles de la Flandre*," works not readily accessible in England, have been freely borrowed from; and in selecting from the German Legendary Tales the author's chief object was to pass over such as turned on magic and enchantment, and to choose those which embodied motives or passions merely mortal. He has admitted but one exception to this rule; and that only because human feeling was there predominant over fairy spells. One of the Rhine Stories had been already made the subject of a poem, the author's earliest literary attempt, and which he soon suppressed. For one or two others contained in the present volume, it might not be easy to give any other authority. But it is hoped they will be read with that confiding good faith which prefers taking things for granted to sifting evidence or comparing proofs.

Anecdotes of authorship are perilous subjects for the

PREFACE.

writer who would so illustrate his own works, whether they be serious or trifling, great or small. Egotism too often endows such matters with undue importance ; and although personal recollections are generally palatable, if detailed with candour and simplicity, one naturally shrinks from what involves private feeling, which the public may be amused by, but rarely sympathises with, and most frequently disdains.

That consideration restrains the efforts of many a man who could tell true and curious things of the world as it is ; and forces him into fiction, as the safest channel for giving vent to his observations on real life. Such has been the case in regard to the present volume, and others which have preceded it from the same pen. Several of the characters have unconsciously sat for sketches which have been placed in old historical frames ; and the author is satisfied if no violence appears to have been done to the Human Nature of to-day, by its being transferred to by-gone times.

These stories were written several years ago, and prepared for the press in one of the most secluded spots in the valley of the Neckar, and recently revised for re-publication in this collection on the banks of the Rhine, after a long interval of absence in another hemisphere, where rivers, on a scale too vast for comparison, have no pretension to the interest attached to its traditions. The Hudson and the Ohio are perhaps in portions more beautiful, and certainly on the whole more grand. But another age of chivalry and of the picturesque in architecture must come round, and — long after the relics of both are decayed — a new generation exist, before those who draw from this favourite Emporium of European Romance need fear any direct rivalry from writers whose inspirations are due to the noble streams of the New World.

If popular authors here valued more highly the fame that passes the ocean, and cared less for the profit to be reaped under a more protective system than exists beyond it, they would be reconciled to the reluctance of America to grant privileges to foreign books, which would restrict those multiplied and cheap editions that are so many tributes to our living literature. For whatever may be thought of existing laws, it is at any rate a consolation to know that millions of eyes between the Atlantic and the Pacific will peruse pages which under other enactments might never find a reprint there ; though the subject of copyright is likely to stand as it does at present, quite as long as some of the old *châteaux* now introduced to the reader's notice.

And in closing these discursive remarks, and bidding adieu to scenes which fact and imagination, the real and the ideal, have by their combined influence endeared in the author's memory, he might be tempted to moralise on the events which now agitate so large a portion of his former haunts. The reader owes his escape from such an infliction rather to the narrowness of the author's space than to the breadth of his forbearance. He however at present confines himself to the hope that the season which is coming may bring a good and quiet time with it, for both tourists and politicians, and that the struggles of the RHINE districts for the establishment of liberty, may be modified by the example of the LOW COUNTRIES. For it is assuredly in Flanders, Brabant, and the rest of the kingdom of Belgium, that is to be seen at this moment the freest and happiest people, and the wisest ruler of the Continent.

T. C. GRATTAN.

London, May 20. 1849.

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THE
FORFEIT HAND.

A FLEMISH LEGEND OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY.

CHAPTER I.

YOLENTA DE MELNA, the dame of Corteryke, sat surrounded by her maidens, in the large chamber appropriated to their hand-work, on the ground-floor of the old castle which gave the lady her title. The building, coarse, massive, and inelegant in architecture and decoration, was situated in the marshes about a league from the city of Ghent, close to the village of Zwinarde, and within the jurisdiction of the Abbey of St. Peter, one of the most important endowments in the diocese of Tournay, which at the period of our story, the beginning of the fifteenth century, extended far over Brabant, and penetrated even into Flanders. And often did the fat oxen of Abbot Gerald, which in good neighbourhood and fair play should have kept within the pale of the church pastures, crush with the harsh hoof of ecclesiastical power the ill-trimmed fences of Corteryke Park, and make unseemly riot among the sheep and kine which browsed or chewed the cud under its spacious elms.

These violations of territory were the subject of frequent dispute between the seneschal of the castle and Christopher de Roden, the abbot's head bailiff. But a more serious cause of remonstrance on the part of the dame, and of retort on that of the churchman, was produced by human trespasses on the bounds created to keep them asunder — the sure method by

which near neighbours might be kept fast friends. There was, in short, little doubt, (and great was the scandal,) that sundry lay brothers of St. Benedict, the order of the Abbey occupants, had from time to time encouraged their cattle to stray into the castle domains, as a pretext for their own intrusion among the pretty damsels who worked at the looms and wielded the distaffs of the dame.

As often as the latter complained to the superior, she was sure to receive a reproach on the score of her handmaidens' levity, to which he paternally attributed any little amatory sharpshooting that might possibly pass between the male and female skirmishers. But like a true shepherd, he never failed on these occasions to send one or more of the monks to keep order among the introduced wanderers of the flock. Yet this only made matters worse. It was roundly asserted that the clerical brethren were little better than the lay ones; and it was certain that two of the former were on different nights caught prowling about the dark avenues which skirted the wings of the castle, while double that number of maidens had, during one short summer, given evidence of symptoms that according to law should be conjugal.

The strictures of the gossips might have been libel, which in those days meant calumny, but is now construed truth. But whatever was the issue of these affairs, it was laid at the door of the monks, and such was their effrontery and their power, that they openly took in the reproach, and scorned the censures of the world. But no matter! we have little now to do with those pious propagators of the gospel, those holy hypocrites of the olden time. Many a hand has dragged aside the veil of their misdoings. For our parts, we are not at present disposed to rake up the ashes of their reputation, nor is it our care to sift the few grains of seed from the chaff of their morality. We have now to deal only with the chief, whose character was, at the period in question, free from the stigmas that stuck so close to the younger members of the fraternity. The religious father in God, Lord Geraldus, as he is called in the documents which furnish our labours, was now in the vale of life, far on the downward slope, where passion's sun rarely warms the gloom of prejudice, and where men fancy themselves chaste because they find themselves chill.

No terms of neighbourhood could be more hostile than those between the Abbot of St. Peter and the lady of Corteryke. Prolific causes of ill-will, besides those above alluded to, existed. They hated each other with all the cordiality of Christians who never failed to say mass or hear it at regular times. But their hatred was of shades as different as their characters. The lady's was impetuous, uncompromising, and candid; the priest's crafty, cautious, and mean. Scarcely a day ever passed without the proud Yolenta openly uttering sarcasm against the abbot, — ay, and curse too, when anger called for an especial vent; and as regularly did the holy Gerald put up public prayers towards Heaven, (too faint to go many stages of the journey), for the conversion of "his well beloved daughter and fair neighbour, the choleric dame of Corteryke."

And we must confess the fact. She *was* quick and fiery of temper, even beyond the too common weakness of those high spirits which wage war with fortune. Her main fault is now told; a somewhat unusual way of introducing a heroine to one's readers, but it was well to state at once the chief trait of character on which our story hinges, and without the development of which, on one important occasion, Yolenta Van Corteryke, otherwise de Melna, had never gained a niche in the Chronicles, or formed a heroine in the Legends of the Low Countries.

We said just now that she *sat* among her damsels. We recall the term. It would imply a steadiness of manner and habit which was very foreign from hers. She sat down occasionally no doubt, but in her usual way she *moved* among them rather, presided, overlooked, bustled through the sedentary ranks with her wonted vivacity, and encouraged the industrious or reproved the idle with an air of prompt authority peculiarly her own.

"Verily, my good Babette," said she with a smile, and tapping the cheek of the girl to whom she spoke, "that is a neat piece of stitching. The wimple that is made by thy finger-work deserves to be worn with a robe of honour. Well done, Dorchie," continued she, addressing another who plied the embroidering needle at a loom close by, "it is thus that a stomacher should be studded — the pearls are quaintly placed, and the braiding fairly proportioned. But eh! what in the

name of St. Bavon have we here?" exclaimed she, briskly turning to a loitering wench who held her distaff awry, and was casting smirking looks out of the window.

"Is this what must pass for spinning in the opening of the fifteenth century? Is it thus a thread should be twisted and knotted that was meant for a sandal web as fine as Cyprus lawn? How would our mothers have stared at such modern degeneracy? So, Bettye, your eyes must be fixed for ever on that grinning red-headed rascal who leers through the park paling? The curse of St. Martin be on him and his insolent compeers, and their hypocritical old hierarch to boot, who sets on his lazy herd to infect my wenches after this fashion! So, you will not answer me? you will not confess your fault, but hang your head down, and look as red as your own mantle of ingrain cloth? Very well!" continued the dame, still more wroth at her handmaid's silence, for nothing increases gratuitous ire so much as submission, while a brisk retort often makes it die away as a sound in its own echo; — "Very well, Bettye; this stubbornness shall have its reward. You expect, no doubt, to go to Zwinarde next Wednesday, to witness the procession of the holy blood. But I promise you, your mantle shall hang on its peg, and no bodkin fasten your hood that day. What!" continued the choleric dame, turning again towards the window, "he is there still. Is this to be borne? Is Yolenta de Melna to be stared and grinned at by the scurvy menial of a bloated priest? Where is the seneschal? Let my men at arms turn out, and drive away yon foxy-pated loon. Where is the seneschal, I say?"

"Please you, dame," replied one of the maids, "master Roger van Oulternyk has ridden over to Dolislacgher, to gather in the geese and turkey tallics which fall due to day."

"Indeed! and is this the way the service of Corteryke is performed? Is the seneschal to do the duty of the bailiff, and the bailiff that of the cook, mayhap? Where is Van Kulmar?"

"It seemeth, my gracious lady, that you are pleased to forget ——"

"No, wench, I am not pleased to forget either my own bidding or myself. I am wroth with myself and all about me. Nay, nay, you need not tell me that Berlo van Kulmar is gone to the notary about that last new proceeding of the

odious De Roden.—I remember it now. Therefore, since the superior officers are abroad, let the lowest of the menials attend me. Call Kobus.”

“Oh, my fair mistress!” exclaimed one of the women, in real or affected horror.

“Kobus!” echoed several of the others.

“Gracious lady!” said the foremost of these female familiars, “how can you breathe such a thought?—Can the dame of Corteryke condescend to call the attendance of such a fellow as Kobus, while serving-men and grooms throng the halls and stables—or while her faithful handmaidens are all ready to do her bidding, be it what it may, and what woman’s powers may do? Dear lady, we wait the word of your commands.”

“I dare say ye do impatiently. No doubt, ye would joyously set out to encounter the profane flatteries of that ill-favoured hedge-loiterer and his base associates, or perchance to fall in with some prowling hypocrite in cowl and coif, and give cause to new scandal from their foul-mouthed abbot, whom I scorn to call holy or reverend. No damsels! ye stir not an inch beyond the walls to-day; nor shall any but Kobus be sullied by the ignoble task of driving off yon trespasser. Let the scullion boy attend me.”

From this peremptory order there was no appeal. In a few minutes the individual alluded to in terms of such unequivocal dishonour, made his appearance at the chamber door, and justified the contemptuous astonishment of the maidens. He was a most ungainly and unfashioned lump of humanity; a Flemish boor of the first water, rough from his native swamps, and rather retarded than advanced in any chance of polishing by his recent promotion from the court-yard to the scullery. He had become, in consequence, the butt of the servants, high as well as low; and the refinement of kitchen wit, compared to stable scurrility, had so completely addled its subject, that he was fast losing, in his in-door associations, the scanty stock of his former ideas. Hurried about from morning till night, badgered, bamboozled, and buffeted without mercy, he was accustomed to run, or rather reel along, at the repeated summonses, which sometimes came so thick upon him from the wicked wit of the upper menials, that he was frequently kept in a state that seemed to solve the

problem of the perpetual motion, and prove the possibility of ubiquity. Called now by a dozen voices which echoed the commands of the dame through the corridors, halls, and passages, and into the penetralia of the scullery, Kobus ran off, "accoutred as he was," but unjerkined and unwashed, in the direction of the sounds; and duly arrived, half breathless and bewildered, at the entrance of the chamber where his mistress awaited him. He was accompanied on his course by roars of laughter from the lazy servants who loitered on his passage, and a tittering chorus from the working maidens received him at the term of his course.

"Kobus!" exclaimed the dame, as she saw him appear. At the sound of her soft yet authoritative voice, he plunged instinctively forward, then stood fixed in astounded veneration on finding into what a presence he was now for the first time not only suffered but ordered to appear. He waited awhile with gaping mouth, staring eyes, and outstretched arms, brawny and bare to the elbows, one hand wielding a frying pan, and the other the impure clout with which he had been scouring it. For some seconds the lady's voice buzzed in his ears, and her form danced before him; but as he gradually recovered his senses, and she emphatically repeated her words, he began to comprehend her meaning and his own duty.

"Dislodge, and drive him away," said the dame following up her orders. "Seize the *goeden-dag** which hangs in the hall, or the *gagne-pain* from over the pantry door, and chastise the daring loon; or wheel out the little springall from the porchway, and discharge a dozen darts or stones at his flaming pate. Quick, Kobus, and do my bidding well; and by this hand and my lady of grace, I will dub thee knight on the field of honour!"

The lady's gravity could no longer keep its bounds. She burst fairly out into a fit of laughter, as she saw the grotesque delight of her champion. The maidens, free from restraint, now pealed a merry chorus; they broke up from their seats, capered and danced at the prospective fun, and thronged round the half-witted scullion, whose first impulse of enthusiasm was to fall down on both knees, and fling himself prostrate at Yolenta's feet.

* *Goeden-dag* (good morning) a peculiar sort of pike. *Gagne-pain*, bread-earner, a huge sword so called, the common weapon of the Flemish foot soldier in those days. *Springall*, a machine for throwing various kinds of missiles.

"Rise, rise, Sir Kobus," cried the dame, striking his shoulder a smart stroke of a distaff, which she snatched from the stool on which its late careless owner had thrown it. "Rise up, good knight, to great feats of chivalry and deeds of fame!"

"Rise up then, sluggard! Be quick and valiant, booby!" exclaimed the maidens, pushing with their sandal-covered feet the uninviting carcass they scorned to touch with their fingers. Their wild frolic knew no bounds. The lady had given them their cue. The quick transition of her temper from serious to light was nothing unusual. Her attendants, who humoured her in every mood, gave way to their own levity whenever hers broke loose, and a dozen wild and girlish pranks were now the consequence. In a few minutes the newly-dubbed parody on chivalry was fitted out at all points. He passively lay, or knelt, or stood, as suited the whim of his equippers. An osier basket covered his head by way of casque; the faded and fag-end of a torn curtain was flung scarfwise over his shoulder, and tied in a bunch at one side. A couple of huge knitting needles were stuck in his shoe heels for spurs, a wooden tray tied to his left arm as a buckler; and a long house broom placed in his right hand, a lance with which he was commanded to sweep the territory of the castle clear of the intrusive rubbish which had given rise to this undignified if not indecorous scene.

Of all who acted in and enjoyed it, the late so serious and peremptory dame was the foremost. She laughed the loudest, and took the most active part of any; and when the accoutring was completed, she seemed the most impatient to witness the result of the freak.

Sir Kobus was now hailed with a general roar of joy, and driven out grinning and capering, and not unaffected by the glee of which he was negatively the author.

"Vlanderen den leeuw! Slae doodt, slae doodt!"* vociferated he, as he rolled sidewise out of the room and along the corridor that led to the drawbridge, just beyond which lay the meadow, in the green hedge whereof the carrotty head of the lay brother was still stuck, while his leering physiognomy

* "*Flanders and the Lion! Kill dead! Kill dead!*" The first the Flemish war-cry; the latter that of the house of Corteryke, and somewhat Irish in its construction.

showed no consciousness of the attack so visibly preparing for him. The windows of the bordueren kammer*, which looked on the moat that surrounded the castle, were all soon garnished with the laughing faces of the maidens. The lady herself occupied a prominent place ; and all the indoor servants, among whom the news soon spread, poured out from every passage to witness the issue of the adventure.

The chronicles of Flanders do not state the minute particulars of Sir Kobus's attack on the lay-brother, nor the means of defence used by the latter. But a short quotation from an old English work, descriptive of an affair between two combatants, furnishes, in lively and appropriate phrase, a very good notion of this. " Well, sur, they soon set to argue the point cum face to face. Very fcerse both t'one and t'ooter. If one plucked by the thrate, t'other, with havers wold claw him by the scalp. Thearfore thus, each fendin and proovying with plucking and lugging, skralling and byting, by plain tooth and nayll, a t'one side and t'ooter. Such expens of blood and leather was thear between them as a month's licking I wean wold not recover. It was a sport verrie pleazunt to see, one with his pinkings and leering after t'ooter's approache. If he were bitten in one place hoow he wold pynch in another ; and if he wear taken onez, then what shyft with byting, clawing, roryng, tossyng, and tumblyng, he coold worke to wynde hymselfe away. And when he was loose, to shake his ears twyse or thryse with the blood and salver about his fiznamy, was a matter of a goodlie relieve."

This to be sure is the description of a fight between a bear and a dog ; but the imperfect state of science in Flanders in those days (and it is but little improved in our own) left small, if any, difference in the conflicts of men or beasts, except those wherein the champions of chivalry had a right to kill each other in a gentlemanly manner.

The result of the battle is recorded : Sir Kobus was totally discomfited : neither his valour, nor skill, nor the inspiration of his cause, were sufficient to resist the lay-brother's obstinacy and superior strength. Monastic dependents were too well fed, and too conscious of their consequence, not to possess great advantages in a conflict with a secular adversary, be he who he might ; and it is certain that on this occasion Sir Kobus was

* Embroidery room.

cruelly unnerved by his enemy's whispered threats (enforcing every thump) of church vengeance and its horrors.

Interference was at length necessary to save Sir Kobus from strangulation, for the victorious lay-brother having finally succeeded in getting him undermost in the boundary ditch, grappled his throat so unmercifully with both hands, that death must have ensued had his grasp not been loosened. This movement, so fortunate for the sake of Sir Kobus, was accomplished in and by the twinkling of an eye. Bettye, the most careless and coquettish of dame Yolenta's spinning Jennies, knowing the power of her glance on her pugnacious admirer, implored the lady to suffer her to sally forth to Sir Kobus's relief. The lady, though indignant and somewhat ashamed at her champion's defeat, had no wish that he should die in a ditch; she therefore gave her consent, and Bettye, resolved to prove that she loathed the red-headed pretender to her smiles, hastily arranged a plan of punishment with her companions, which she left them to communicate to the dame.

Darting from the chamber — flying through the corridor — whisking across the drawbridge — and arrived at the place of combat, she excited the attention of the lay-brother, who sat astride the prostrate body of his enemy, by giving him a no daintily dealt whack across the shoulders with Sir Kobus's broken weapon. Turning suddenly round at the summons, the victor saw close behind him one of those very eyes (Bettye looked at him *en profile*) which had been the original cause of his quarrel. At the sight he relinquished his hold of Kobus, and following the beckon of the deceiver, he fawningly traced her steps towards the castle, as though her eye had been of onyx whose magnetic magic is well known — or was in those days — to every believer in the black art, which priests and their satellites were, *ex officio*.

Scarcely arrived at a large and gloomy clump of cypress and yew, which stood among the cheerless decorations close to the moat, the luckless lay-brother saw himself in a moment surrounded by a group of the mischief-meaning damsels, who had repaired thither with full consent of the dame, in pursuance of their plot. Before time was afforded for conjecture, much less for defence, Bettye flung her scarf round the body of her victim, and aided by Dorchie, Babette, and the rest, bound

his arms effectively. Then the whole developing a blanket of most capacious size, caught it at sides and corners with such a grasp as was befitting to damsels nourished in the fashion of those sinew-bracing days.*

In a moment the lay-brother was rolled down, and in another he was tossed to the height of the topmost branches of the yew-trees hard by. At every elastic bound the arms of the executioners seemed stronger, and their hearts harder. The more he roared, the more they laughed. Sir Kobus, who had slunk off towards the stables, and had been well pumped on by a friendly groom, now came chuckling forward, and gave a helping hand; while sundry of the varlets were not slow in relieving the panting damsels; the dame herself being the while a delighted witness of the sport from the nearest window of the castle.

But loud as was the laughter, the cries for mercy, and the shouts of execration and contempt, which burst from the various parties, they were all out-noised by the harsh and sudden utterance of a tremendous oath which scattered dismay into the ranks of the servants, (Sir Kobus himself included,) put the maidens to flight with screams and shrieks, and procured the lay-brother a timely respite from his torture.

"Sacred thunder — devils — and storm gusts!" † vociferated the terrible voice of Christopher de Roden, the high bailiff of the abbot Gerald, as he rose up in the stirrups of his charger or war horse, and thrust his head and half his body, both being, as was their wont, in almost the full accoutrements of war, over the hedge which separated him and some half-dozen armed followers from the scene we have described.

"What do I see?" cried he, "a lay-brother of St. Benedict tossed in a blanket! Sacrilegious hands desecrating the church property? Monstrous, monstrous! and frightful will be the punishment to all concerned! Get up Claesman Blittersburgel! come out of the bounds of this hell-gap of Cor-

* We at this moment recollect Sancho's treatment by the Spanish wenches. Even so. That neither proves us to be plagiarists nor discredits *our* adventure; on the contrary, it confirms the chronicles, for there is little doubt that Cervantes heard the story of Sir Kobus from some of the Flemish allies who fought with him at Lepanto, and that he wove into his satire one of the incidents which properly belonged to *our* legend, and which we therefore reclaim and appropriate.

† This is the nearest approach we can make to the translation of an oath which is much more sublime in the original Flemish.

teryke ! What the fiend brought you into that pickle ? and how did this happen ? Ah, dame, this is the worst of your wild pranks ! All that has gone before is as nought. The fourteen suits depending in the episcopal senate of Tournay between you and his reverence may be now abandoned — the fine of a hundred and fifty Paris livres for cutting the tail of the black tithe pig — the mulct of four *moutons d'or* for muddying the waters of the perch-pond — the penalty of the sixty wax tapers to St. Bavon's shrine for the snow-balls pelted last winter at father Ysenbaert — these and many more, the prices for the irreverent, spiteful, unsanctified doings of your people, instigated by you and the foul fiend together — all may be now forgotten — an outrage like this cancels all, as a moral sin swallows up a dozen peccadilloes. Vengeance and woe to the dame of Corteryke ! The ban of the church and anathema be on her and her household, of every sex and age ! This I speak in the name of my holy lord spiritual, the mitred abbot of St. Peter. — Why, in the devil's name, I say again, Claesman Blittersburgel, dost thou lie log-like there in that sink of iniquity, with thy blanket about thee as though thou slept there at ease instead of being most uneasily tossed therein ? ”

“ Oh, valiant Herr Christopher, noble de Roden, chief of the feudal men of our reverend liege lord Gerald ! I am not able to move — I am dislocated and bejellied from blade-bone to anklet. It is well my neck has been spared ; every other member is disjointed, and my bones ache most fearfully. Take me hence I prithce, ere those vixen miscreants, those impure harpies, pounce on me again ; for sure I am that the siren-like deceiver, Bettye, has sworn my destruction at the shrine of the false gods to whom she and her sister mermaids offer up service.”

“ Nay, Claesman, I cannot, in due point of law, cross this mere-dyke even for thy rescue. Such a step might invalidate our right of justice on the perpetrators of this heinous deed. But lie thou there in peace of mind, let thy bodily discomfort be what it may. Should these cannibals return when I am gone, and slay thee outright, thou shalt have full justice. I promise thee that, on the dignity and honour of the abbey of St. Peter.”

A piteous groan was the answer to this assurance.

"And moreover I shall forthwith betake me to his reverence the divine Gerald, and engage that he shall say a mass for thy soul within an hour, — myself vowing in the name of the martyrs, and taking your old comrade here, John de Weck, as witness, to bear the charge of the tolling of bells, and of the priests' and choristers' tapers, at my own private cost. So peace to thee, Clacsman, shouldst thou, as all appearances promise, die soon and unshriven."

"Ah, graceless and heartless De Roden! well did I deem that such would have been thy conduct in this case!" exclaimed Yolenta, as the bailiff turned aside his horse's head and prepared to move away. "What brave champions of church wrong, and spoliation, and oppression! Art thou then afraid of a houseful of women — thou, and thy swordsmen, and thy lazy troop of monks, and all thy vile appurtenances! By my troth and by St. Bavon's shrine, I should have honoured thee, instead of opposing and prosecuting, hadst thou boldly broken bounds to the rescue of thy fellow there! But thou art sunk in new disgrace by this cowardly abandonment of him. I invite thee and thy followers. Come over and take away that justly punished intruder, who dared to thrust his red pole like a fire-brand into the combustible materials of Corteryke. Take him away, and I give thee the blanket wherewith to carry him off, as a token of remembrance to him and the crew ye belong to, of what awaits the insolent interlopers who put a hair of their head into my domain."

As Yolenta spoke, the bailiff listened attentively, an involuntary air of respect mingling with the look of insolent defiance which he was forcing up. He paused a few seconds after she had ceased, and his satellites seemed to be murmuring some words of advice. He shook his head at each suggestion, with the proper dignity of a feudal retainer to his underlings, and then addressed the lady.

"Dame of Corteryke, I have listened to and pondered your words; and I shall ask you in reply, Do you think Christopher de Roden is the dolt such words should be only addressed to? Believe you that I have served the Abbey of St. Peter seven-and-twenty years, and not learned enough to save me from being the dupe of a woman? or that I have been in daily quarrel with you and your wenches ever since

your widowhood, only to fall into your snares to-day? No, no! that poor devil that lies there before my eyes is example enough, if I could be such a fool as to be caught by your fair words. And there must he lie, or die, if such be your devilish malice. Be satisfied you shall see me again to-morrow, with due form of law, to cite you to judgment for this crime; but at this face of the hedge I have justice on my side."

"Injustice and roguery, and cowardice and cruelty are at whichever side may shelter Christopher de Roden," retorted the dame in high tone; "and to make the medley complete, impudence, ugliness, and rank rascality shall be added. Hark ye, my serving-men, wrap up you filthy fellow in the coverlet which his vile carcass has polluted, and roll him over the mere-dyke, and into the abbey lands. Let Master de Roden bear him off to the abbot, and tell him he would do well to beware how he shows even *his* priestly cap over my bounds."

"Beware, dame!" cried De Roden in great ire, "beware! remember that holy Gerald has ban and anathema in his power."

"Fellow, I scorn him and his ill-gotten and unholy power. Did he ban the bravo who struck down Humbert of Corteryke at the altar's foot, and stained my maiden robe with the bloody stamp of widowhood? Did he then or ever vindicate religion and justice? and dost thou, his mean minion, mumble forth threats against me now? Away wretch, or by the heart's blood of my murdered lord, I'll let loose the watch dog from the fosse upon thee and thy creatures. I give thee five minutes to bear off you pestilent fellow, and to take thee clear out of sight — away!"

With these words the angry dame retired from the window, commanding her maidens to resume their various occupations. The serving-men followed her directions, and removed the lay-brother beyond the bounds, when De Roden, placing him carefully on one of his followers' horses, rode away towards the city of Ghent, muttering terrible threats against all concerned in the transaction we have faithfully narrated.

CHAPTER II.

"*AH, Loridon!* was it well in thee to throw me upon my own unruly temper for support, in a moment of mutual passion, when we were both wrong, both too hot-headed, and too warm-hearted—when a soothing word, or a kind glance from thee had smoothed all, and secured our happiness for ever! Why did thy pride prevail over thy love? What disastrous consequences have flowed from one rash step! and I—what a traitor was I to my own heart! How did I betray its best interests, for the indulgence of one weak sentiment! How sacrifice, in one maniac moment, all the blessings of life! But it is now too late. The die is cast. Instead of joy and love, and all their bright enchantments, I am doomed to the basest drudgery in existence; cooped in by rules and forms, which I continually revolt against, like some imprisoned bird that flaps with ineffectual wing the bars of its cage; the current of my better feelings turned aside by the harsh impediments of my fate; all that was gentle in my nature ruffled, and the evil parts stirred up into boisterous froth and foam, until whirlwind passion is become the only element in which my unquiet spirit can exist! I was not meant for this. Whose doing is it, Loridon, thine or mine own? No matter now. Reproaches are unavailing, of thee or of myself. My doom is cast in suffering, and I must fulfil it."

So soliloquised the lady of Corteryke, when she retired to her private chamber, after the undignified bustle was over, and when her mind, recovering from its turgid state, sunk into painful recollections of past times and events, from which she gained fresh cause for disquiet, and scarcely one element of consolation.

The passages of her life had as yet been few, for she was but in her eighteenth year. Her title of dame, her matronly rights, her tone of authority might have given other notions of her age to those who only heard of her as we have hitherto shown her: but even those, when turning back a thought to the levity and almost indecorum we have described, will perhaps make some allowance for a high-spirited girl in a rude age; her affection balked, her short career chequered by vio-

lent events, and she left totally to her own control, which few even of more sober years, or in better regulated times, apply very severely against *self*.

As soon as reason began to regulate the girlish fancies of Yolenta van Melna, she was convinced that she had been right in having bestowed her whole heart, without knowing or caring what reason might think of the measure, on young Loridon van Bart, son of Johan van Bart, lord of Lettelhausen, and consequently nephew of that feudal tyrant's brother, Gerald, Abbot of St. Peter's.

The cession of her affection thus made was without the knowledge of any member of her lover's family or her own. Loridon was as cautious as herself on a point which engenders prudence in minds that on other occasions seem unsusceptible of its influence. They loved as love is best and purest, in utter secrecy; but they both paid dearly, on one painful and fatal occasion, the tax for that greatest of luxuries, and felt keenly the want of some confidant, whose friendly counsel might regulate the aberrations of youthful passion, stepping in between lovers and the ruin they often hurry to in a paroxysm of delirious affection, or, as in this case, of unreasonable resentment.

Loridon cherished jealousy among the degrading drawbacks which were in those days considered as a part and parcel of love, as though a forced deformity were a natural accessory of the passion! In the spirit of feudal pride, he on all occasions worked himself up to fits of suspicion, and seemed to take especial pleasure in embittering the pure chalice which nature had filled for his own and his mistress's delight. He seemed haunted by a morbid longing for their mutual misery. It was rare that a meeting, even in the delicious stealth of a twilight grove, or a moon-illuminated corridor, in solitude and secrecy—love's own natural atmosphere—did not end in a quarrel on some frivolous pretext, and that the sweet hour was not defaced by frowns and taunts, reproaches and tears.

The consequence of these habitual broils was at length an actual belief, on his part, that he had reason for his ungenerous, and, in truth, his unmanly conduct. He justified it, too, by the feeling that he made himself as unhappy as her; more so perhaps, for remorse added a sting by which she was never assailed. But she became by degrees irritable, and at times

intemperate. She was ashamed of the yoke which she hugged so closely, and angry with herself as with him. She at length learned to give herself relief by retorting his reproaches, and anticipating them now and then. Her ardent mind thus opened under the influence of a tempest, for it was such, and not the soft gales of feminine affection, that Loridon had raised in her bosom. Thus the infatuated pair went on. Quarrel grew on quarrel. The deeper they loved, the more profound was their misery. They, on a dozen occasions, saw each other "for the last time," and met again and again in more torment than before, to lament the past, swear forgiveness and forgetfulness, and break away once more in a wonted fit of phrensy—for such conduct, whether in the fourteenth century or the nineteenth, is nothing short of that calamity.

At length, on one occasion of more than common absurdity and violence, Loridon swore he would set out for France, as a volunteer in the war then waging with the English invaders of that country, and never more see Yolenta. This was a new form of a usual threat; and she met it by declaring, for the first time, that if he so abandoned her, she would instantly accept the offers of marriage (his pretext for all their quarrels) almost weekly made to her by Humbert of Corteryke, who was not only repugnant to her taste, but the sworn and hated enemy of her lover's family.

Their common proud feeling was now up in arms against their own happiness. The false point of honour was raised, as the standard under which they were to perish sooner than yield. Loridon persisted in his threat—Yolenta completed hers. Within a week after their utterance, the former was riding in the ranks of the Constable de Richemont, as a gentleman aspirant for chivalric honours, and the latter was led in triumph to the altar by the grim and grizzly lord of Corteryke, more than double the age of her lover, and in every other respect immeasurably his inferior.

The haughty energy which had enabled Yolenta to force herself to this sacrifice was evident in her look and bearing as she moved towards its consummation. She had the air of a self-immolating victim for a false principle, not of a suffering martyr to a good one. She could not rob herself of her personal beauty, but she had deprived herself of that without which beauty has no charm. The exquisite expression of

female grace was not displayed in her resolute glance and proud step, nor in the contemptuous defiance with which she silently hurried towards the fate she volunteered. Her parents and friends, long time the advocates of Humbert von Corteryke, and to whom her sudden resolution had given astonishment as well as pleasure, seemed awed by the desperation of her manner ; while the fierce bridegroom himself, amidst all the pomp and pageantry of the ceremony, looked ill at ease, as though he augured nothing good from the accomplishment of his suit. And well might he have his misgivings, if indeed fate, according to the belief of the age, gave warning to its doomed victims, sometimes however too late for their safety.

The procession advanced up the aisle of St. Peter's church in Ghent, the priest stood at the altar steps, the music pealed, and the throng of spectators gazed with painful admiration on the young bride and her mate, whom a universal murmur pronounced to be an ill-assorted pair. The ceremony went on, and no one, not even the bridegroom, wore a smile of joy. The lookers-on exchanged glances and shrugs of significant meaning. "Such a marriage bodes no good," seemed to be spoken by a hundred tongues ; though not a murmur was heard, and it was only the responsive looks of each that appeared to acknowledge that sentiment in his neighbour. The priest's voice ceased, the book was closed, — the nuptial anthem was just going to be pealed from the choristers' gallery, and the organ sent forth a few lively notes, when a loud voice exclaimed close beside the new-married pair, "Let a death-dirge be sung, not an epithalamium !" While those around turned their eyes in the direction of the words, a rapier was plunged deep in the body of Von Corteryke ; and as he fell dying to the ground, the white robe of Yolenta was stained, as she herself said to De Roden, "with the bloody stamp of widowhood."

As is usual on the perpetration of such startling crimes, all eyes were turned on the victim, attracted by the mixed groan and scream of death, the voice of which is a summons wherefrom none may turn aside. Humanity and curiosity are among the strongest principles of man ; and when combined on such an appalling occasion as this, no one had a look to turn from the bleeding bridegroom and the stupified figure of her who stood transfixed in speechless horror by his side.

But during the general consternation, some of the observers were for a moment attracted by a human form darting like lightning from the main group across the altar steps and into one of the small vestry doors which flanked it at either side. The figure instantly disappeared — the door closed with a violence which startled the agitated group that raised Von Corteryke's body, now a breathless corse, from the ground ; but no certainty as to him who struck the blow had ever been obtained. The abbot of St. Peter's replied, to all inquiries, that "the sinner had sought sanctuary, and found it." The relatives of the murdered man had no appeal. His widow obtained possession of his castle and domains as her undoubted right ; and was installed in her new honours, under these circumstances so singularly shocking, which appeared to one so inexperienced more like the fulfilment of a marked and extraordinary doom, than a course of those accidental events which chequer the scenes of life.

It was therefore no wonder if the overboiling temperament of our heroine was in constant ferment, in a state so ill adapted to control it. She was perpetually at war with herself, and very often with those around her ; and when intervals of soft and amiable feelings took place, they were usually filled up by some extravagant freak of girlish vivacity. The abbot of St. Peter's was the object of her especial detestation. That he had screened her husband's murderer from justice, was enough to justify it to her own conscience. But independent of that, she felt bound to adopt the bitter hatred of him to whose title and honours she succeeded, against all who bore the name of Van Bart. One exception she no doubt made — but there is no general rule without *one*. And that which she religiously observed in favour of poor Loridon, was compensated for in the increased proportion of hate which she bestowed on his father, his uncle, and all the rest of the family.

Conjectures were many as to the perpetrator of the murder. Every body, Yolenta included, was convinced that some one of the Van Bart family had done the deed. General elements of vengeance existed on their side, quite enough to fix it on any individual of the name. But he, who of all others had the greatest motive to urge, if not to justify the crime, escaped suspicion. His absence was known to all ; the existence of that motive but to one : and *she* would as soon have accused

Heaven's justice or the purity of her patron saint, as have imagined Loridon capable of an act of even trifling dishonour, much less one of coward treachery.

Little more need be said to prove that she loved him with her whole heart. But, in her situation, and with her temper, love was no longer what nature meant it to be ; no longer a balm poured on the mind's asperities, but a subtle poison, corroding the proud heart it could not soften.

Nearly a year had passed over. Yolenta had thrown off the first weeds of widowhood. Her lively spirit required relief under the pressure of her situation, and found it in the indulgence of a love of dress, and in the display of the dignities so strangely acquired and still so uncongenial. Preparations for gay entertainments to her relatives, and expensive additions to her wardrobe, chiefly occupied her now. Every needle and bodkin was put in requisition, every broidery frame was full ; and such scenes with her maidens as that in which we introduced her, were the common occurrences of the day, varied by tricks played upon the abbot of St. Peter's and his little-honoured fraternity, such as were passingly alluded to by De Roden in his recapitulation of complaints.

Yolenta slept but little on the night of this last adventure. Her pride was urged to its topmost bent, by the audacity of De Roden ; and in her involuntary recurrence to the lover whose rash abandonment had led to such humiliation, she found fresh nourishment for irritation and anger. The dawn of morning found her risen from her uneasy bed, and prepared to meet the threatened visit of the high bailiff in the most determined of imperative moods.

And long ere the sun had travelled his meridian course, Christopher de Roden was seen at the great gate of the castle ; and by the voice of a herald, who was habited in the livery of the proud abbot he served, he demanded entrance for himself, the poursuivants, and other functionaries charged with the delivery of a summons to the dame, and various members of the household, " to appear before the feudal baron of Lettelhausen, lord paramount of the territory of Corteryke, to answer various charges of high misdemeanors and misdeeds acted in and upon the body of a lay-brother of the order of Benedictines," and a long array of technical ambiguities and etceteras wound up the herald's speech, the remainder of

which we shall leave to any faculty of the mind our readers may please to exercise.

It is very probable that the doughty De Roden hoped for a refusal to this summons; for he surely gave symptoms of surprise mingled with alarm, when the huge wooden gates creaked backwards, the drawbridge was lowered, and a formal invitation to enter pronounced by the sturdy old seneschal, the high bailiff's declared antagonist on many an occasion of legal and illegal dispute, not only since Yolenta's accession, but long before her bright black eyes had opened on the world.

"Come in, fair gentlemen all, bailiff, notary, and pour-suivant," said the seneschal — "valiant Christopher de Roden, learned Lyens van Leenward, honourable Martin Skynet, pass the bridge, and enter the court of Corteryke in peace and for the due fulfilment of your bidding."

"Hark ye, Master Roger Oulternyk," replied De Roden, with a doubtful look — "I hope, and so do these worthy gentlemen, my very good friends and associates in this business, that all is fair meant as well as fair spoken. You see that we come unarmed and unharnessed, in due form of law, with civil herald and the banner of peace; but no trumpet nor feudal men-at-arms, lances or swordsmen, nor the war-standard of our holy abbey, which, albeit, in good cause of quarrel, and against all enemies, I am ready to carry, or to die in good guardianship of the same."

"Let not your valiant limbs quake, nor your teeth chatter, bold Christopher — all is as it should be."

"That phrase likes me not, master Roger! A twisted yarn makes a straight cord; a polished rind may hide a gnarled knot; rocks lie deep that cause no ripple; and many another wise saw of our good country of Flanders tells me to ask the meaning of that 'all is as it should be?'"

"What a plague! Does the lion-heart of De Roden con the cowardly proverbs of old wives, and his tongue of thunder condescend to utter them? — Come on, come on, gallant Christopher —"

"'Tis not for myself I have any qualms, — 'tis for the sake of these peaceable functionaries, d'ye see, for their sake that I, unarmed and unable to protect them, must have my wits about me for want of better weapons."

"Not for us, not for us, most worshipful bailiff," exclaimed the notary of the poursuivant, ashamed of becoming avowed sharers in De Roden's fears; "we are begirt with the armour of civil privilege, — the municipal rights of our noble city of Ghent be our guardianship, — we are not afraid!"

"Afraid! who's afraid, gentlemen?" exclaimed the bailiff, turning sharp on his comrades, who were used to hear and to quail before his bullying tone, for he was the essential spirit of valour when he had to argue with a civilian. "Who's afraid, I say again? If another word so dishonouring is whispered, I shall immediately retire from this business and leave it in less resolute hands; — and I am very well disposed to do so even now."

The seneschal could not suppress a laugh; and the keen ears of De Roden distinguished a shrill echo to it, as though from a woman's throat, in the porch-way beyond the bridge. This operated on him with marvellous effect. It must be a daring coward indeed who can brave the test of female ridicule. The grand bailiff stepped across the bridge in advance of his friends and attendants; but halting yet another moment, he asked the seneschal "if the watch dogs were all secure, and the working wenches fastened up?"

"Neither dog nor damsel shall be let loose on you, without the orders of the dame," replied the seneschal. The doubtful answer struck a new chord of alarm in the bailiff's breast. He would have retreated incontinent beyond the bridge, had he not at this moment perceived it to be drawn up. In another, the ponderous gates were fastened behind him, and he saw himself, for the first time, in the court-yard, and in fact, in the custody, of the feudal mistress of Corteryke. Sad misgivings shot through him and made him shudder like the night wind that sweeps the forest and shakes its every branch. But ere he had time to utter another word, or to advance further, the dame herself appeared standing just within the porch of entrance, in front of a formidable array of half a dozen figures drawn up in line, cased in iron, armed cap-à-pic, and looking more awful from their showing no sign of life beyond the tremulous shake of their black plumes, which gave an almost supernatural air to their display.

"To you, most noble dame, Yolenta of Corteryke, in all

honour and privilege the seignorial proprietor of this manor, domain, and castle, the right reverend and holy father in God, Gerald, Abbot of St. Peter's, greeting : ——"

So far had De Roden, summoning up all his courage, proceeded, when the dame cut him short : — "What mumbling mummer art thou," cried she, "who comest hither with whining tone and set discourse, assuming the name and title of that most pious priest, Abbot Gerald, of St. Peter's? Speak, fellow, to thine own name and quality ;— I know thee not."

"Not know me, noble and amiable dame? I am Christopher de Roden, in all humility your servant."

"Thou, fellow, that pride of church service, that pattern of high bailiffs! — Impostor that thou art! Did Christopher de Roden ever appear in such a shabby suit of civil garniture? "

"It is required by my present functions, magnanimous dame."

"Could his voice of thunder ever sink to that squeaking tone? — His lion-look change to thy sneaking aspect? Pestiferous wretch, out on thee! Away this moment from my bounds, or by my saint the ban dogs shall tear thee limb from limb!"

"Oh, merciful lady!"

"Speak not a word, foul libeller of the thrice valiant Christopher — Out on thee, I say! Charge, halberdiers! *Slae doodt! slae doodt!*"

At the utterance of the terrible war-cry, the mail-clad figures, automaton-like, levelled their lances, and advanced without speech, but at a clattering trot, towards the high bailiff. He turned and would have run, had not the solid obstruction of the great gate stopped his way. There he could not stay, inviting, as it were, the hostile lance to pin him to the wood-work; and to stir now, either right or left, was to rush on their points. Down therefore he fell flat on his face, uttering piteous cries for mercy and pardon for all offences past and present against the dame and every person of her household, whom he almost individually named.

Yolenta advanced close, and with a hazel twig, which stretched invitingly to her hand from a tree close by, she laid several well-planted stripes on the sprawling poltroon. The gate in the mean time was wide opened, and the scene amply

displayed to his companions beyond the bridge ; and when, on repeated commands from the fair executioner, he arose to withdraw, a loud burst of revelry accompanied the rattling clash of half a dozen suits of mail, which were at once unbuckled and dropped to the ground, by as many of the mirth-making damsels who had been cased therein, and who now pursued their runaway victim (persecuting him the while with gibes and laughter) to the utmost verge of the bridge, where even his grave companions could not refrain from joining in the laugh.

Once beyond the castle's verge, De Roden recovered in some measure from his fright, on beholding from what species of danger he had escaped. But burning shame took place of frozen fear. The vengeance founded on exposed cowardice is deeper than the well in which truth lies hid. The look, the tone, the gesture it now inspired are not to be told, and scarcely to be imagined.

"Dame Corteryke !" exclaimed de Roden, in half-smothered accents, — "the soft white hand that struck an officer of Holy Church is forfeit beyond redemption ! Ponder well on that truth, and enjoy your triumph !"

There was a terrible tone of reality in these words, that spoke conviction to Yolenta and her attendants. Their laughing voices were all at once hushed. The broad smile on each face was turned to a sad and solemn expression. Every limb seemed paralysed ; and each maiden stood motionless, with eyes turned on their menaced mistress. Yolenta betrayed no visible signs of fear. Had the axe been raised over her wrist, she would have scorned to let a nerve or muscle betray the weakness of alarm. But a chill struck her heart ; and her eyes turned involuntarily on old Roger van Oulternyk, as if to inquire into the truth of De Roden's threat.

"It is too true, my gracious dame," said the seneschal, as though he replied to a positive question. "The abbey privilege is notorious — the vengeance of the church implacable — the lord of Lettelhaussen and his brother the abbot will be too glad, alas ! to seize this frightful occasion for your destruction."

"What must be done, good Master Seneschal ?" asked the dame.

"You must fly instantly these walls — these wide domains ;

all will be sequestered to the church ere sunset; the forms in such a case have the wings and the force of the whirlwind. — If seized on, your fair hand will surely be severed on the block, by a ruffian executioner, and banishment for ever be added to the sentence.”

“Indeed! it is a hard sentence — a dear price to pay for a few strokes on the back of a base craven like that. But with the blessing of St. Bavon, good Roger, I shall baffle the blood-suckers.”

With these words, uttered in a steady, if not a daring tone, for *that* she could not assume, Yolenta turned into the castle, and lost no time in preparing for her safety.

CHAPTER III.

WITHIN an hour from this untoward adventure, consternation and confusion had established their reign on the ruins of all that had existed of domestic enjoyment in the castle of Corteryke. The tremendous power of the brother tyrants, who, in right of their feudal fiefs and ecclesiastical prerogative, ruled over the territory included in our scene of action, was at this period of Flemish history at a frightful height. No individual suzerain of the lower classes of the nobility could hope to resist it effectively. To do so at all, for however short a period, would have required the skill of a warrior and the desperation of an adventurer, joined to a prodigious influence over the mind of each follower. What then could be hoped from the power of a mere girl, who, though endowed with courage and energy, was deficient in every other requisite of resistance? She readily enough found support from her servitors and dependants in minor attacks on the tyrant abbot's authority, when they only assailed his fish ponds, his profligate monks, or any other unimportant or worthless portion of his possessions. But when it came to the fact of striking a high bailiff — the supreme instrument of church exaction, there was scarce a heart that did not quake with fear, and scarce a voice that was not ready to cry “sacrilege!” The exceptions were probably to be found among the women. They either

did not consider the danger so immediate, or hoped it would fall less heavily on them, or were affected by some other of those light influences of the female mind, which in times of threatened peril give them an air of courage that would be ungraceful and unfeeling in the tug and tumult of conflict. Exertions of female prowess at such times are exceptions to the general rule of nature, which regulates the duties and the charms of women. We cannot withhold our *admiration* from those who mix in such doings, and overstep the limit of feminine duty : — but we view them as though they stood on a pedestal above both their sex and ours ; and are seldom anxious to take them down and hug them in our arms.

Yolenta's maidens found a charm even in the threatened horror of anathema, while it procured them one busy and bustling day of variation to their life's monotony. They played a thousand fantastic tricks of affectation, and prepared for concealment or flight with airs more suited to a masquer's revels than to the serious occasion at hand.

The men, excepting only the seneschal and scullion, escaped as best they could, and scampered away across the wide and wooded plains to the shelter of relatives and friends. But the two extremes just alluded to, to wit, Roger Van Oulternyk and Kobus, met upon this occasion on a common point of duty ; stood firmly to their post, and showed no symptoms of flinching from the danger which perilled the mistress they were bound to serve in weal or woe, and the place they had sworn to abide by in honour or in ruin.

Old Roger declared, that having for thirty years and more braved all the dangers that had so often threatened Corteryke Castle, in civil feuds beyond reckoning, he would die sooner than abandon it now, even though the heavy hands of its worst enemies were raised to crush it.

Sir Kobus, — for his title was confirmed beyond reversal, — inflamed with valorous gratitude towards her who had raised him so high on the roll of dignity, vehemently vowed that he would serve her to the last as a true follower, and never quit her side but at her own positive command, or for her special welfare, till death, or some of the abbot's strong-armed feudal men, dragged him away with irresistible force.

Thus the castle was sure of one devoted guardian, and the lady of one determined follower ; and each soon entered upon his hazardous and solitary functions.

Among various articles of dress composing the wardrobe which for some time past had occupied Yolenta and her attendants, there were more than one suit of male attire, in which it was very common for women of quality to appear at masquerades and other fanciful entertainments. In one of those suits she was now speedily equipped ; and a favourite palfrey, of size suited to her light weight and accustomed to her hand, was quickly caparisoned by the care of Sir Kobus, and ready to receive her on its back. Sir Kobus himself, hastily accoutred, well armed, and furnished with a large saddle-bag, filled with some necessaries for his mistress, and a smaller leathern sack containing articles of his own, was soon mounted on a strong horse and riding at full speed from the castle bounds after the apparent boy who cantered away before him, gracefully waving one hand in farewell to the solitary seneschal, while the other tightly held the reins of the high-spirited palfrey.

Manifold and curious, no doubt, were the adventures that befel the maiden-widow and her attendant, who, to the sturdy stupidity on small matters common to his class, joined much of that cunning sagacity on important occasions which is so remarkable in half-witted persons. But whatever those adventures might have been, they have found no record in the chronicles which furnish our materials ; and we have therefore to bound over a considerable chasin of time, unfilled by any event which might serve as a stepping stone for our passage.

Weeks, most probably of pain and peril, elapsed before Yolenta and her squire reached the destination she had fixed on from the first moment that she resolved to abandon her castle and all her earthly possessions to the harsh grasp of the law and the church. There is not one female reader who will not have foreseen that destination. But, for the information of the less sensitive sex, we must say it was the French camp, in the heart of Normandy, where, as Yolenta had been previously informed, her never-forgotten lover was at that time serving with great honour and *clat*.

This was a bold step — a weighty undertaking. But while Yolenta pleased herself by considering it as urged by despair, it was in fact the suggestion of undying hope, mistaken awhile for its drear antithesis. In short our heroine was

“ ——— in love, and pleased with rum,”

which came in a shape that justified her having recourse to the measure for which her heart had long been imagining an excuse. She therefore abandoned all her possessions without a regret, and threw herself on the wide world with such buoyant animation as the mariner braves the ocean's waste withal in search of the home of his young and long-cherished affections.

"Halt, and rein up, young Sir, and you, irreverent fellow! Who and what are ye? Friends of King Charles, or of the English? Answer quickly, or this arrow will whistle through one or both of your bodies."

Such was the address of a French sentry to our heroine and her follower, as they trotted briskly out of the confines of a small wood in Normandy, immediately beyond which lay the rear-guard of the Constable's army, at that period opposed front to front to the English force.

"Good soldier, we are neither enemies of King Charles nor friends of the English," replied Yolenta, reining up her palfrey — "so let us pass towards the French camp, where we have pressing business."

"Ay, with your good favour, master bowman, let us pass; our horses are much blown and we need refreshment," said Sir Kobus, striking his heels inwards and urging on his steed.

"Hold, I say!" cried the sentry. "This ambiguous answering and suspicious haste please me not. What do ye seek in our camp?"

"A dear friend," answered Yolenta.

"Young gentleman, you must be, methinks, even younger than you look, to seek that article either in camp or court. What is his name?"

"Loridon Van Bart, a Flemish gentleman, of name and condition. Where is he to be found?"

"*Vertu Dieu!* That is more than I can tell. We have so many adventurers and *vauriens* 'of name and condition' with the army, that it would puzzle the provost marshal to find out any given individual among the marauders and pillagers which throng its ranks."

Yolenta's blood rose high, but an instinct of prudence floated on its tide. She suppressed any retort, and merely asked what was to be done.

"Blood of the saints! that I know not as far as your concerns go," replied the soldier; "but as regards my duty, it is

that I hold ye both here, hostages for each other, till the relief comes round, and ye may be led prisoners to the picquet guard."

Sir Kobus's freckled face blushed a copper-tinted crimson, and he gave first a look of defiance at the sentry, and then another of fierce meaning at his mistress.

"No, Kobus," said she, interpreting his thoughts, "we must obey the rules of the camp; this honest archer does but his duty in holding us secure."

"Which he will do, depend on it, in spite of flattering speeches or scowling looks from master or man. So dismount ye, and stand back to back under that elm. There—that will do; now let me blindfold ye both with the ends of your own kerchiefs. So—good! Stand quietly now, for the first that shows a movement towards escape shall be instantly transfixed to the tree's trunk with this ell-yard arrow, and his comrade swing presently up to its toughest branch." Yolenta saw that submission was the best policy. Both she and her follower submitted to the irksome operation; and within an hour were released and conducted by the visiting patrol within the lines of the French encampment, with all the precautions usual in such cases. The whispered buzz of voices as she was led along could give Yolenta no clue to discover what was the conversation of her conductors. But on one occasion she fancied a murmured exclamation of surprise; and a little afterwards some one took her by the hand and pressed it softly, and as she thought reassuringly, in his own. Whatever might have been meant, the effect was comforting, as is the slightest mark of sympathy, whether by look, word, or action, in cases of doubt or peril. Yolenta could not account for the feeling of confidence that seemed conveyed to her by this simple incident, nor did she wish to examine it very profoundly. Young and sanguine minds rarely like to scrutinise whatever seems a token of hope or promises pleasure. If they did, they would be less frequently the victims of self-deception.

When the bandage was removed from Yolenta's eyes, she could scarcely believe the evidence they gave; and Sir Kobus seemed bewildered even more than she. The imperfect notions which they had both formed of a camp, were all belied by the scene now before them. The rude tents, coarse treatment, hard living, and strict discipline which had been always

associated with our heroine's notion of military service in the field, were little in unison with what she now gazed on.

The first object which caught her attention was a splendid canopy, of many coloured silk, surmounted and flanked by banners, pennons, and standards, under which were seated several richly dressed men, at a table covered with such a gorgeous specimen of feasting as was superior to any thing in the circle of Yolenta's previous experience, even in the entertainments of Flemish wealth.

When she turned her looks to the right and left, she was amazed at the prodigal display of luxury and splendour under canopies of dazzling brilliancy, or in elevated balconies: and on stages all round were to be seen bands of musicians, groups of mountebanks, rope-dancers, and jugglers, all playing most fantastic tricks; sorcerers and soothsayers surrounded by ardent listeners; while cooks and badged servitors prepared or carried about the most luscious dainties. A little farther off were paraded a prodigious number of horses in magnificent caparisons; hawks, dogs, and their attendant falconers, huntsmen, and varlets in rich liveries; and mixing in all the shows and splendour, was a company of most beautiful women, whose extravagant style of dress and bold looks and gestures proclaimed them to be of a class of which Yolenta had heard, but wherewith she had never before come into contact.

The silence which had been studiously observed while the prisoners were brought blindfolded into this scene of enchantment, was suddenly changed to a burst of various noises as soon as the removal of the bandages gave a loose to restraint. The sudden crash of music, the clamour of voices, the bursts of laughter, and the chorus of all other incongruous sounds, aiding the impression of visual wonders, made Yolenta start, stare, and thrill with undefinable awe, as though magic had conjured up the scene; while Kobus seemed as though struck dumb, and crossed himself vehemently, as his eyes rolled wildly and his mouth gaped wide, to the infinite amusement of the bystanders. After a sufficient time had been allowed to give the wonder-stricken strangers a general conception of what they saw, but not enough to allow any attempt at analysing, much less accounting for, the strange details, a man arose from his seat under the main canopy, which being the place of honour, added to the deference with which he was re-

garded and listened to, proved him to be the chief in dignity and importance of the motley assemblage. The appearance of this individual rivetted Yolenta's attention. He was tall and harsh-featured, and a mixed expression of cunning and ferocity gleamed in his eyes. He was armed *cap-à-pie*, but over his coat of mail he wore a large mantle, such as was common to possessors of the black art, a white beard fell far down on his breast, and he held a wand in his hand such as it bebecmed a conjuror to bear. As he waved his hand with an air of authority, immediate silence followed; and then fixing his eyes with a piercing look on Yolenta, he exclaimed, "And who art thou that comest in that impostor's garb into my presence? Speak!"

"If you know my garb to be assumed, you may perhaps be able to divine the rest without my telling," replied Yolenta, in a tone that betrayed no fear. She was buoyed up by an undefinable notion that she had a protector at hand.

"Bravely answered! but somewhat bold withal, and more bebecming the sex you assume than your own," said the man sternly.

A blush passed over Yolenta's cheeks, and she trembled to find that her sex was discovered. She attempted no answer.

"Come hither!" exclaimed the mysterious personage; and she obeyed as if by a spell. When she was close beside him he took her by the hand.

"Let me examine this fair palm," said he. "Why, how is this? Here are lines of virgin token, crossed by those of marriage, ay, and of death! What may'st thou be—maiden or dame? or is it that thou art both?"

A buzz of astonished exclamation from the many wassailers present broke on Yolenta's ears, and completed the confusion caused by the words of the wizard—for so she no longer doubted her questioner to be. She attempted to withdraw her hand; but he held it with a firm grasp, and continued as follows.

"Maiden, wife, and widow!" so say the chiro-mantic lines—but more is spoken on this tell-tale palm. Sacrilege is written here—and deadly punishment—this hand is forfeit!"

At these words, pronounced in a terrible tone, Yolenta shuddered and felt herself growing pale and faint. She looked round for some protecting glance, some outstretched hand, to

give again such pressure as had erewhile thrilled through her with delicious hope. She felt that all was but delusion ; and as the fearful man who had so truly read and so strangely spoken her sad history let drop the hand which he denounced, she felt it fall by her side, palsied and numb, like some withered branch struck dead by lightening on its parent stem.

"Bear away the doomed one—let the church recover its victim !" said the mysterious being under whose control Yolenta seemed so magically to have fallen. She was led away, she knew not how, into a tent apart from the canopy where this strange scene had passed before her, more like some pageantry of magic than an action of reality.

In the tent she found a female attendant, and several suits of dress adapted to her sex, but bearing painful evidence of her own humiliated condition. They were coarse, and of the pattern worn by penitents doomed under ecclesiastical sentences. The woman signified to her that she was immediately to throw off her male attire, and equip herself in one of the more suitable habiliments. Yolenta at first started back, repugnant at the change, for she had become accustomed to the dress she wore, and was revolted by the texture and make of that now destined for her. A moment's reflection however told her to submit ; and she had no sooner reassumed the wimple, the kirtle, and the coif, than she experienced a return of those feminine feelings which had been laid awhile in abeyance by her disguise and the manly bearing she had assumed with it.

It was some time before Yolenta could recover her self-command sufficiently to address her attendant in a way likely to gain her good will. At length she inquired into whose hands she had fallen, giving a turn to the question as though she considered herself obliged rather than hurt by the treatment she received.

"In truth, my good mistress," replied the woman, "you may look upon yourself as well treated—so far. Giles, marquis of Laval, seldom deals out any delicacy to those who fall into his hands, but commonly hands them over to the sacrifice without ceremony or delay."

"The marquis of Laval ! and is it into the power of that monster that fate has thrown me ? Oh, Loridon, Loridon ! I am indeed now lost to thee as thou art to me !"

"Hush, hush, fair lady ! the mighty one has ears for every whisper, more than mortal man possesses !" said the woman

with a stifled tone, in which fear seemed mixed with pity. Yolenta caught the double feeling with the readiness inspired by her own alarm.

"Oh!" said she, "can you not save me? Can you not tell me tidings of the young lord of Lettelhausen?"

"Bless you, mistress! I have not been able to save myself, and I hear tidings of no one beyond the bounds of this prison, for such, alas! is this tent to me."

"Yolenta would have renewed her appeal, but before she could speak again, a curtain door of the tent was drawn aside, opposite to that which had seemed the only entrance, and the awful object of her terror was seen standing beyond in another and larger compartment. While Yolenta's eyes were fixed on him, the female attendant disappeared; and as he motioned with his hand for the advance of our once courageous and daring heroine, her knees tottered, and fear almost paralysed every limb.

"Come forward!" exclaimed he, in a voice of irresistible command. She knew not by what impulse of obedience she was in a moment standing close before him.

"Do you know me?" asked he, in a tone of thunder.

"Yes," answered she; "the reputation of the marquess of Laval has penetrated even into the marshes of Flanders."

"And what do you know of me?"

"Your undaunted courage, your immense wealth, your princely establishment of men and animals, your hunting train, exceeding even that kept up of yore by Edward of England or Gaston de Foix,—your more than mortal knowledge—your—your——"

"Go on, go on, do not hesitate! Fill up the measure from the withering blast of fame—my cruelties, my sorceries, my demon tricks, is it not so? What then, the walls of Ghent have echoed to the voice of my deeds? But have they heard of all that has driven me to hate mankind, and form a compact with man's arch-enemy? Does your remote world know *why* I call up the fiends and dance the round of demon revelry? Can those who execrate my name dive into the mystery of my nature, and who—like you, weak woman—call me monster, tell the difference between that and man?"

Yolenta could not have answered, even if she had known how to reply to this outburst. The power of utterance seemed to have forsaken her.

"And what would you here, fair dame?" resumed the Marquess of Laval.

"You are not one who needs to ask questions—my object is no doubt known to you," faintly murmured Yolenta, inspired to the exertion by the hope of hearing tidings of her former lover.

"You seek a friend, forsooth? Whom do you seek?" sternly asked the marquess.

"The son of the lord of Lettelhausen."

"The lord of Lettelhausen *has no son*." The emphasis of these words struck cold on Yolenta's heart.

"Then Loridon is dead;" faintly murmured she; and she would have sunk to the earth under the shock, had not her arm been powerfully grasped by the terrible being whose words still echoed in her heart.

"The lord of Lettelhausen lives—let that suffice thee," continued he; "lives to claim and exact the penalty of thy sacrilege. This hand, soft and white and gentle as it feels and looks, is nevertheless doomed to repair its outrage. A blow on the back of the bailiff of a consecrated abbey! Stripes on the sanctified shoulders of an anointed dignitary's deputy! Oh, monstrous, monstrous! but the offending member is doomed—the hand is forfeit to thy liege lord—and his feudal ire, whetted by the holy vengeance of his most reverend brother, calls out for prompt and plenary satisfaction."

Yolenta thought that she perceived in this tirade a tone of bitter irony, a mock heroic violence blending with a smothered laugh. It was one of those instances of overacted energy which leave one in doubt as to their being meant in joke or earnest. She stood still and gazed for a solution of the doubt.

"Go then," continued Laval, "go to the place from whence you came—back to the scene of your crime and the site of your punishment. You shall be well tended on the way—that I take in charge—and from the mouths of the holy abbot you have outraged, and the mighty lord who claims you in judgment, you shall know your fate. The altar of sacrifice is ready—away! and think yourself a rare instance of good luck to escape thus harmless from the power of Giles de Laval;—you, who for passion's sake drove a lover to despair, drew a husband to death, and doomed yourself to destruction!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE ferocity with which the last words were uttered deprived Yolenta of a wish to prolong the interview which they were so well fitted to conclude. She felt released, as though of a heavy weight, when she found herself alone, but it was like the relief of death to a life-burthened wretch. Despair and desolation seemed now her lot. She looked round for the female who had given her at least looks of pity, and who, herself a sufferer, was likely to sympathise with, if not able to serve her. She too had retired, and for a few minutes our heroine stood in solitude of the worst and most agitating description, the very opposite to that delicious kind which the reflective or suffering mind flies to, as the wearied body seeks repose. The torture of Yolenta's silent thoughts became almost intolerable; and she was on the point of rushing out among the libertine population of the camp, whose revelry resounded in her ear, when the curtain was again raised, and two men cased in steel, with visors down, and bearing no visible cognisance by which their service could be known, entered the tent. They beckoned Yolenta away; and she readily obeyed the summons that removed her from a state of impatient suffering, than which she could imagine nothing worse. They passed along several covered passages, some faintly lighted, some quite obscure, until at length they reached an opening, beyond which the verdant colours of herb and tree told that the limits of the encampment were passed, and that the champaign country was at hand.

Yolenta hurried forward to the open air, and felt the comparative delights of freedom, as it blew freshly on her face. A litter, closely covered, stood ready. She scarcely waited the motion of her conductors to spring into it. They mounted two horses, which stood ready caparisoned close by. The driver was in a moment in his seat. All was, in an instant more, in movement. Yolenta closed her eyes and sank back on the seat, without venturing a conjecture as to where she was going, or wasting a thought in vain efforts to unravel the strange mystery of the scene through which she had just passed. A confused maze of images danced before her mind. The wizard marquess and marshal of France, for he was both,

who had given so weighty a proof of his magical powers in divining at a glance who and what she was, appeared to her overheated fancy in a thousand forms. The pageantry of his court—for so it might be called—sprang up in more than even its fantastic variety,—but mixed with every vision and every recollection was the pale, ghastly figure of Loridon, in a thousand forms of death, while the knell-like sounds still rang in her ears—“The Lord of Lettelhausen has no son!”

At times anxiety for the fate of poor Sir Kobus crossed her brain. But this was a light cloud, that left a lighter shadow. The absorbing gloom of her lover’s loss overcast every lesser shade.

Yolenta was never a good calculator. She had often impatiently “counted the hours,” in the common acceptance of the phrase. But that is done by the irregular pulsation of over-ardent temperaments, not with the steady reckoning adapted to dates and distances. She therefore had little notion of the space she travelled, or the time occupied by her journey, when on a certain day at nightfall she was told that she had reached her destination, the dungeon-keep of the Abbey of St. Peter’s at Ghent. She felt some emotion at the mention of the place, but she betrayed none. Her mind was lowered to the deepest pitch of apathy. She followed her conductor to a gloomy cell; and neither asked a question, nor expressed a wish for aught beyond the wretched accommodations of the place.

Reflection however came on, in her despite. She could not stifle the thoughts which rose buoyant on the flood of memory, deep tintured as they were with the bitterness of its waters. The images of past days of happiness floated before her, but they were imbued with colours of woe. Events of late occurrence returned with less vagueness than they were clothed in at the moments of their action. Notions of the future rose up, embodied into shapes of fact, all hideous and revolting. Her lost lover, her blasted hopes, her horrid and ignominious punishment, for what she held it but mockery to call a crime, all mixed together in a confusion of pain and anger; and she passed one of those nights of misery which none but the sensitive and the impassioned can imagine, much less be ever called on to endure. And while we may suppose her in these heavy hours of suffering, we may slightly sketch what

had happened during her absence, in the matter of her offence against the ecclesiastical dignity of her enemy the Abbot of St. Peter's.

Yolenta had friends and relatives—words not by any means synonymous,—but the Chronicles do not specify their names. Whoever they were, they took an active part in her cause, which she herself had seemed so totally to abandon. Aided by the efforts of her venerable and faithful senechal, they made a prompt appeal to the Council of Flanders against the penal sentence pronounced by the Lord of Lettelhausen which condemned Yolenta to the loss of her right hand, and that of banishment for fifty years, adjudged by the Abbot, as well as the decree of confiscation, which condemned the castle and domain of Corteryke to swell the revenues of St. Peter's abbey. The procurator fiscal instituted a process against the abbot Gerald, for having overstepped his authority by this severe sentence, and having thereby encroached on the rights and privileges of the Count of Flanders, whose feudal tenant the Dame of Corteryke was—the fiction of law which exists to our day being then in practice, making the sovereign a party aggrieved in offences against the subject.

The Council of Flanders at that time held its sittings at Lisle. The abbot was summoned thither; and on non-appearance had his aforesaid decree reversed, and was moreover mulcted in a fine of 2000 nobles. To give a better colour of justice to this sentence, and to deprive the abbot of all excuse for appeal to a higher authority, some of the members of the council betook themselves to the town of Alost, which belonged to the empire, and were thus out of the jurisdiction of the parliament of Paris, which the county of Flanders still at that period acknowledged. There the decree against the abbot was promulgated; but he denied its legality and refused obedience, inasmuch as he denounced it as being made "*in fraudem legis*;" and while the question of justice thus lay in abeyance, (the natural and common consequence of law proceedings in those days of confusion,) the intended victim was, as we have related, handed over to the custody of her inveterate enemy, by an agency as remote as it was mysterious.

The cause had excited an intense interest throughout the county of Flanders; but at the very moment when this was

at the highest pitch, and every one waited with impatience for the decision of a point which compromised the safety of so interesting a personage as the young dame of Corteryke as well as the privilege so important both to clergy and laity, the matter seemed suddenly hushed up—the Lord of Lettelhausen ceased to appear in public—the abbot and his people, as well as the relatives and friends of Yolenta, no longer spoke of what had been lately a subject of their incessant clamour—and the name of the sentenced offender was no more pronounced either by friend or foe.

This was immediately after the period of her falling into the hands of Giles de Laval, and during her journey from his camp in Normandy to the city of Ghent.

But quite unexpectedly, and without any previous announcement to the public, the abbey gates were one day at noon thrown wide open; a procession of unusual splendour appeared, directing its steps towards the great church of St. Peter; choristers, taper-carriers, shield-bearers, men at arms, and all the imposing mixture of feudal and religious pomp preceding Abbot Gerald himself, who appeared clothed in his magnificent white garments, bearing his abbotal staff in hand, his choral cap on head, and loaded with ornaments of state. He was followed by a train of relatives of the houses of De Melna and Corteryke, with their dependants in various liveries, and more than a usual display of state. At some distance following came a female dressed in white robes, but without any hood of honour on her head, which was covered with a simple veil of penitence, concealing her face from the gaze of the multitude, which poured out from the then thickly populous streets of Ghent. She was preceded a few paces by a servant bearing a silver lavabo or tray, whereon was a lighted wax taper; and another who carried a shield, on which was painted the heraldic cognizances of De Melna and Corteryke, and under them the effigy of a hand as though just severed from the arm. Behind the penitent, but at an interval which was so filled up by attendants as not unnecessarily to shock her, was the public executioner of the city, carrying a small axe, sufficient for the punishment of an offender far more robust than the fragile being he followed, but not adapted to those dismemberments which he was in the frequent habit of operating, on the persons of the nu-

merous criminals which then abounded in that profligate city and its neighbourhood.

The wondering crowds soon learned that it was the young and lovely dame of Corteryke that was thus led in solemn state to the church, to hear the sentence of her sacrifice pronounced, and the mockery of religious service poured over this act of cruelty. In spite of the bigoted devotion with which the people of Ghent regarded all the observances and privileges of religion in those times of ecclesiastical tyranny, they revolted from the horrid spectacle which was now promised them; and it was only the excitement of curiosity and wonder that kept down the loud expressions of a discontent which was not imperfectly murmured in the throng. But the procession had reached the church. All the main actors had been admitted within the chancel, and some beyond the railing of the great altar, on the steps of which stood the abbot surrounded by his officiating band of monks; while an imposing force of armed servitors kept due order among the breathless crowd that thronged the aisles and avenues beyond, and pressed forward to catch every word of the solemnity which was about to take place. The executioner remained outside the church door, in the court-yard, where it was understood the execution was to take place; and never were looks more sinister cast, or execrations more deep-felt muttered, against this necessary but hateful evil of civilised society, than those now spontaneously breaking from the eyes and voices of the astonished and anxious people, who were unable to obtain an entrance into the body of the church.

While all eyes within were bent towards the altar where the abbot had taken his station, or on the white-robed victim who knelt at its foot, she, uninfluenced in that solemn moment either by fear of what was to happen, or by any sentiment of vain display, unseemly anger, or weak hope, raised her white veil and cast her looks around. She saw on all sides faces of enemies long time avowed mixed with those of still longer imagined friends. How such a junction could have taken place, she could not by any means understand; but she did not perceive in any the expression of either triumph or compassion. A strange look of undefinable enjoyment seemed to pervade all; but it was in every individual so much the same, that in her hasty glance around she could

not trace varieties, nor had she a wish to analyse or account for aught that she perceived. She had passively obeyed the instructions of her gaolers and attendants during the preceding night and on that eventful morn, which was the one immediately following her arrival in Ghent. No murmur had escaped her at the precipitation with which she was hurried to her fate. She was not conscious of one bitter thought against her persecutors. The concentrated power of despair had absorbed all lesser passions; and the only feeling to which she seemed alive, was that associated with the oracular sentence of woe — “The Lord of Lettelhausen has no son!”

Yolenta would not have even noticed any one individual face among those now within her observation, had not, at the moment that she was about to replace her veil and calmly wait the issue of the awful scene, a buzz arisen beyond the altar railings, and loud shouts been heard from without the church. A piercing sentiment of hope darted instantly through her breast. She felt involuntarily impressed with the belief that the indignant people were about to rescue her from her threatened doom. Her eyes fixed themselves intently on the large grated door of the chancel, which now flew wide open; but instead of that rush of popular deliverers whom she expected to see, she had the anguished mortification to observe the heralds and shield-bearers of the Lord of Lettelhausen, whose liveries were too well known to her, while audible mention of his name ran through the congregation.

Despair now kept her gaze fixed where hope had before directed it; and to complete the pang, she soon discovered the commonly inexpressive face of her former follower Sir Kobus, shining with a beam of what she thought ferocious joy, while his body, decorated with the badges and cognizances of Van Bart, came rolling onwards, with a speed as indecorous towards the holy place, as it seemed infamous on the sad occasion. “Ingratitude and treason are the last sharp stings reserved for me!” murmured Yolenta; “Let me now then die!” and letting fall her veil once more over her face, she was sinking to the floor, when she felt herself caught in a powerful yet gentle grasp — one hand was seized within that, whose pressure she even then could recognise as the same which had thrilled through her when a blindfolded prisoner in the French

camp — with the other she instinctively raised her veil again — and with eyes straining in the double excitement of ecstasy and wonder, she gazed on the face and figure of her Loridon, until the united force of feelings which threatened to drive her mad, was subdued and softened by a dissolving flood of tears.

“Yes, Yolenta, yes!” exclaimed her ardent and deeply-affected lover — “Here I am, to claim the forfeit due to the Lord of Lettelhausen by his too powerful vassal, who proves her might even in the very payment of her penalty. Yes, Yolenta, this hand is mine! mine, by every privilege of law, and by the still holier right of love! Mine, to foster and cherish, and hold in my throbbing bosom, while the heart’s blood runs which its soft touch now stirs into redoubled speed — mine, while this into which it is now locked has nerve to grasp a weapon in its defence — mine, till death severs the sweet bond by which I am now here to be joined to thee for ever!”

So spoke the Lord of Lettelhausen, for such was Loridon become, by the sudden death of his father, even at the very moment that Yolenta fled from her castle under dread of his and his brother’s tyranny. It was said that a secret blow from one of the men of Corteryke cut him short in his course of tyranny. On that point, however, the Chronicles are not explicit, but they agree in stating that with his dying breath he confessed to the murder of Baron Van Corteryke by his own hand. How little had he foreseen, in his short-sighted vengeance, that his son, Loridon, would so soon and so amply redeem the wrong to her whom it most shocked but least injured!

Reasons of private and family urgency caused the sudden death of the old lord to be kept secret till Loridon could be apprised of it, and at the same time made acquainted, by the trusty friends whom he had left to watch and report the conduct of Yolenta, with the circumstance of the assault on Christopher de Roden. A swift messenger soon reached him, and a faithful and prudent agent kept him well informed of all Yolenta’s measures, from the moment she fled from Corteryke till she appeared at the outposts of the camp. We need hardly state that this agent was Sir Kobus, who preserved the secret of his engagement with Loridon with all the phlegm and fidelity of his nation.

Loridon had been for many months serving in that portion of the French army commanded by the celebrated Giles de Laval, whose valour and eccentricities obtained him the double reputation of high courage and deep infamy. His splendid establishment has been already alluded to, though by no means described; and for its details, as well as the accounts of his sorceries and cruelty, we must refer to some of the old French historians. It was the good luck of Loridon to save the life of this remarkable man in battle. His influence over him was in consequence such, that he consented to shelter Yolenta, and see to her safety, instead of making her his own peculiar prize—the common fate of every young woman of personal attractions who happened to fall into his power.

But he did this on one condition, that he might deal with Yolenta as he liked; and the way he liked was to torment her with his pretended magical power, and to torture her with threats and semblances of a coming punishment, which he never meant her to suffer. For he was the inventor of the sentimental quibble by which Loridon claimed and secured her “forfeit hand.” The latter was bound by a solemn oath not to reveal himself to his love, though he was close by her side all through her journey to Ghent, until the moment of the denouement arranged by Laval, and strictly followed to the very letter of his plan. Sir Kobus was sent forward to prepare Abbot Gerald and the friends of Yolenta for the part they were to act—and now, we believe, all necessary explanations are summed up.

These were afforded to Yolenta herself in many an after-moment, when she could find leisure from the making up of that long arrear of love which existed between her and Loridon. But to lead to the fair exercise of all that was due to both of them on that account, Abbot Gerald proposed an adjournment from the chancel of the church to the little chapel of St. Benedict hard by, to complete a certain private ceremony of partnership, as soon as that of compromise was performed in public in the way arranged for the legal satisfaction of all parties. The curious document that specifies this last-mentioned solemnity is carefully preserved; and we cannot better or more authentically conclude the relation of our legend than by inserting a translation of this instrument, which so slyly slurs over the chief cruelty of Yolenta’s sentence,

and all that might tell the secret circumstances by which the main fact could be explained. It is well, however, that the minute accessories of the principal transactions were within reach, otherwise the memory of Yolenta Van Corteryke would have gone down to a posterity even more remote than is formed by our readers of to-day, as a record of compounded felony, instead of overpunished levity and amply rewarded love.

TRANSLATION.

INSTRUMENT of REPARATION of the noble Lady Yolenta Curtrosinis, called *De Melna*, for having abused and even struck with a stick, in the discharge of his duty, Christophorus de Roden, bailiff of Lettelhauthem, on the fourth day of April in the year 1396.

In the name of God, Amen. It happened on the day above mentioned, that a cause was to be heard, of and concerning some controversies, complaints, and debates between the religious father in God, Lord Geraldus, by the divine permission abbot of the monastery of St. Peter, at Ghent, of the sacred order of Benedicts, in the diocese of Tournay, in the name of his congregation on the one side, and the noble Lady Yolenta Curtrosinis, called *De Melna* on the other, from certain causes arisen on the part of that same noble lady, (as is declared both in actual letters, and as in other authentic documents, concealed and openly in the power of the same lord abbot,) relative to the same complaints, concerning the religious father's sentence, decree, or order, (to which the noble lady had submitted, as is proved by letters written on that subject, and placed in the custody of the same lord abbot,) the already-named noble Lady Yolenta being assigned, appeared in person. The noble lady having thought on the enormity of her crimes, and especially, that she had injuriously and spitefully ill-treated a certain Christophorus de Roden, bailiff of the same lord abbot, and of the aforesaid church in the parish of Lettelhauthem, in the diocese of Cambray, whilst performing his duty as bailiff, and even so far as to strike him with a stick. For which enormous deed, lawfully proved by the feudal men of the same religious father, and of his church, on a certain day being banished by a trial without the dominion of the church of St. Peter aforesaid, for the space of fifty years,

publicly, solemnly, and judicially, within the boundaries of the said monastery of St. Peter, and in the virstallium therein existing, to obtain the remission of which banishment, indulgence, and peace from the same religious father, she appeared personally in the aforesaid monastery of St. Peter, followed both by a decent suite of shield-bearers of a noble race of parents, as well as of footmen. Therefore the same noble lady being present in the aforesaid church of St. Peter, and awaiting the arrival of the same religious father, the religious father in God, Geraldus, the abbot himself, clothed in his white ecclesiastical garments and other ornaments, and wearing above the choral cap, with the abbotal staff which one of his shield-bearers carried before him, came down, and placed himself within the solemn choir, before the great altar of his church, in which his underlings, in white, sang the sacred office, a great multitude of people of both sexes standing round about. Of which-named religious father the abbot, the same aforesaid noble Lady Yolenta awaiting the arrival, going from the place where she had waited, her relations going before, and the footmen following, in the arms of two noble shield-bearers, only wearing a slight veil on the head without any hood, humbly advanced to the presence of the aforesaid religious lord father the abbot, and reclining in sign of humility, offered to the same lord abbot, in and for amends of the abovementioned deed, a certain silver lavabo, which one of her servants bore before her with a lighted wax candle placed in it, (and on which lavabo were placed and are placed clearly and distinctly, and in large and notable letters on the outside, the title or superscription of her fault and reparation, and the fist and figure of a woman, together with the arms of the said noble Lady Yolenta Curtrosinis ;) begging him, as a guilty person, that he would be well pleased to pardon her, and to take off from her the banishment pronounced against her, on account of the enormity of the crime perpetrated by her on the person of the said bailiff, and her contempt of the said lord abbot and his church. But there, at the command of the said lord abbot, Johannes de Vracht, bailiff of the feudal men of the said church of St. Peter aforesaid, in the presence of several feudal men of the said church, namely in the presence of the noble, and powerful, and honourable man Symon de Linteme, a soldier, of the son of Peter Symoens, of John de Schaghe. of

Symon Parys, of Henry Macch, and William Drieghe, asked the same noble Lady Yolenta if she had performed the first fruits of the amendment, for and because she had beaten with a stick, and otherwise ill treated Christophorus de Roden, bailiff of the same religious father, and of his aforesaid church, and although bailiff of the same, and exercising his office, and because he did perform his duty? Which noble lady replied in a loud and audible voice, that she had done the things before appointed for the aforesaid guilt and fault; but pardon being asked by the same, and a confession of the aforesaid guilt being made, the same aforesaid religious father in God, Geraldus, made the lavabo offered to him, with the lighted wax candles, be hung up before the altar, before the noble lady removed from the place of the oblation of the lavabo, and where she had asked pardon; and then he benignantly granted an indulgence to the said noble lady, and remitted the aforesaid punishment; which favour, indulgence, and remission the same Johannes de Vracht intimated to those of the people standing round about from the great altar as before, and called upon the aforesaid feudal men, together with Lord Martinus de Mors, the priest's notary, and required of the same notary an instrument in the name and at the request of the said church of St. Peter; which aforesaid feudal men and notary again asked of the same noble Lady Yolenta, if it would please her to give her own testimony to the truth of the things done, acted, and confessed by her? who replied with a benevolent look, and of her own accord, Yes. Upon which, as before, the said Johannes de Vracht called upon the testimonies of the aforesaid. But the said noble lady being pacified, and reconciled to the lord abbot and his church, the aforesaid religious father lord abbot, with his servants and feudal men, and Lord Martinus de Mors, and the often-mentioned noble Lady Yolenta, with her shield-bearers and followers, together with the above-named Christophorus de Roden, entered a certain chapel of St. Benedict, situated in the said church of St. Peter towards the door, a great multitude of people of both sexes standing outside, and looking and earnestly listening through the lattices, posts, and door of the said chapel. And which people being there congregated, the aforesaid Johannes de Vracht repeated with a loud voice the words of the same lord abbot, from the high altar as before; that although the noble Lady Yolenta was truly called to the

church of St. Peter, and that she was reconciled to the bailiff for injuries she had done both to him and the church in his person, yet that it was the intention of the lord abbot, that both persons, namely, that the noble Lady Yolenta and Christophorus de Roden *as Christophorus* and not *as bailiff*, should be in peace, and should remain in good and firm tranquillity; and that thus they, namely, that noble lady and Cristophorus, should abide by the decree and mandate of the same lord abbot; expressly declaring, that whoever should do the contrary, and thus be the aggressor, should pay a fine of a thousand Parisian livres. In sign of which agreement of peace, the noble Lady Yolenta before Christophorus, and then Christophorus himself, and also afterwards he and the noble Lady Yolenta Curtrosinis remaining together, touched a certain white wooden rod which the same Johannes de Vracht had in hand; but for a fuller or farther conviction, the persons also standing about the said noble Lady Yolenta and Cristophorus touched it, at the request of the same religious father, who reserved to himself the right of pronouncing the above fine on a violation of the peace. Then the same Johannes de Vracht, in the name of the said church of St. Peter, repeated with a loud voice, not once, but often, the testimony given by the said feudal men and Lord Martinus as public notary; to which requisition and repetition the said feudal men and notary, with the consent of the said noble Lady Yolenta and Christophorus, replied in terms of acquiescence, and upon all and each of them on the same day below written, which was the third holiday of Easter, and indeed upon all things agitated, performed, done, offered, begged, granted, pacified, and otherwise in any manner completed, promised to give testimony to the truth, by placing in the proper time and place the accustomed sign, subscription, and seal, on the letters or papers then produced. But upon all these things written by me, public notary below signed, a public instrument has been requested for the testimony of the persons present. Done in the places and hour appointed, in the 1496th year from the birth of our Saviour, on the fourth day of April. For the perpetual right between the two, Pönifacius, called the ninth, as successor of Urban, called the sixth whilst he lived, and Benedict, called the thirteenth, as successor of Clement, called the seventh whilst he lived. *Oh grief! a schism existing in the holy*

Church of God! The honourable men who were present at this are, John Carpentator, licentiate in arts, from Paris, and Leyns van Leenswarde, senior, the witnesses of the Tournay and Utrecht dioceses being specially summoned.

And I, Johannes Bargh, of the diocese of Tournay, sworn public notary by the apostolical and imperial authority, and by that of the episcopal senate of Tournay, have been specially present at the said oblation of the lavabo, at the asking of pardon, at the granting of grace, and at the remission of the banishment, together with the repetition of Johannes de Vracht, and at the researches made by the feudal men, and by the said Lord Martinus respecting the aforesaid noble lady, and the answers of the same noble lady, and in the aforesaid chapel at the reformation of peace, and all other and each thing above written, with the said witnesses; and when I saw and heard that these things were thus done, I at length completed the present public instrument, written with another hand, myself being occupied with other things, and I have signed with my accustomed sign, and subscribed myself to the same, being called to the testimony of all the aforesaid.

THE ORPHAN OF CAMBRAY.

A LEGEND OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

CHAPTER I.

IN the year of grace 1305, and about the month of March, and during the episcopal reign of his reverence John de Bethune, of Hainault, the king of the guild or confraternity of the mulquiniers, gave up the ghost, in the ancient city of Cambray.

After long intrigues and longer speeches, for the worthy cambric-weavers and thread-makers of those days were almost as prone to quarrelling and prating as the burghers of the present time, the election of a successor to the defunct chief of the corporation, fell upon Master Eustace Dinault, a safe and jovial companion, and a discreet member of the town council.

One may guess, without being told, what scenes of festivity and feasting, what indigestions and head-aches abounded for fourteen days.

In the first place, the king of the mulquiniers, in honour of the three persons of the Holy Trinity, (the common custom,) fed for three days running, and three times each day, all the members of the guild, to say nothing of their relatives, friends, and acquaintances, who were all entitled to be thus treated, by the statutes of the town and immemorial usage.

On the other hand, the richest members of the guild took their turns to entertain, in their private mansions, and in due course of custom. Glorious days of hospitality! when feasts and festivals were, what they ought to be, the types of good fellowship and the links of social life, instead of formal ceremonies, exchanged in stiff observance of conventional habits, an obligation to those who partake of, and an annoyance to those who give them.

Small chance is there now of calculating how many golden

crowns were spent, or what quantity of victuals were consumed, any more than the number of wine-flasks which, according to the facetious saying of King Eustace, "yielded up their spirit" on this occasion.

Far better at once to say, that the malquiniers sat down, on their wooden stools, to table soon after noontide mass each day, and that they never stirred till night-fall, and only when the warning sound of the curfew-bell made them start from their revelry, with a general exclamation of "already !"

It was at the same hour, and a few days after Easter-day, that one of the most highly considered members of the corporation, Master Bartholomew le Baudain, had wished a cordial good night and pleasant dreams to the numerous guests who serpentine from his mansion towards their various homes.

There only remained with him in the great eating-hall two persons, and those of very different descriptions. One was the reverend canon of the cathedral, Father Nicholas Watermetz ; the second a man dressed in a many-coloured pourpoint, covered with little brass bells, which tingled at every movement of the wearer. He, at a signal from Master Bartholomew, hurried out to prepare the varlets of the canon, and they in their turn prepared his reverence's mule — but this they did not accomplish with equal speed ; for they had so often clinked their cannikens in honour of the king of the guild, that their fingers found it no easy task to buckle the straps, and tie the various knots of the animal's caparison.

Seeing this state of things, Le Baudain ordered the bell-covered attendant, who, by name Jacob Parigault, was the *sot-souris* or fool of the corporation, to walk steadily before his reverence's mule to the bishop's palace, where he lodged, torch in hand, and with a keen eye around him ; necessary precautions in passing through the quarter called Hell's Gap, which lay about half way on the road.

The place distinguished by this uncourteous title still exists in the town of Cambray ; but in the days we write of, it was very different from what it is now. But even now it is hideous. Narrow lanes, miserable huts, a poisonous atmosphere, a lazy and filthy stream, and a wretched population form its main features. In this vile place, one never sees the broad day-light ; a modest woman hurries through it, her eyes cast down, and does not breathe freely till she is beyond

its precincts. And well she may put forth her speed ! For nothing is seen at the doors or windows of the huts but infamous young females, or, crouching on the steps, or sitting against the walls, odious old ones, bandying base jests or coarse abuse with drunken and ragged men. At times, the sounds of cracked and screaming clarionets and fiddles are heard, playing a fit accompaniment of miserable music to degraded nature.

At night the aspect of the place is certainly not improved. At all hours there arise cries of pain, the sound of blows, the oaths of the depraved. Attracted by the tumult, the patrol arrives. The lights are instantly extinguished ; the noises cease. The unnatural calm is only broken by the measured tread of the guard. But no sooner is the regular tramp lost to the keen ears of the listeners than a new murmur begins ; new uproars break out ; and the peaceable and honest citizen, who has ventured into the deceitful repose, hastens his steps towards his own respectable and quiet neighbourhood.

This is not a pleasant picture. But five hundred years ago the place presented one still worse.

There were then no signs of civilisation, even in its lowest aspect. There were neither streets nor houses. Nothing, in fact, but a wide marsh, traversed by an ill-made and worse-kept causeway, which passed through a large mass of crumbling ruins. No Christian ever put foot within them, unless in company with some priest, who could set at rest the evil spirits by which they were notoriously haunted.

The place was approached by a sort of outwork, called the "Hole of the Damned." It was the corner of the town in which were the "Jews' Street," "Cut-throat Cross," and "Rogues' Alley," the haunt of miscreants of the lowest degree of villany. The house of the hangman and the town-gallows stood prominent here, as a perpetual remembrancer for the edification of the inhabitants.

During the early part of his homeward ride, the Canon Bartholomew, who seemed to enjoy the freshness of the night-air, after the heating debauch from which he had risen, entered with much glee into the spirit of the jester's practical jokes, and laughed heartily at the strokes of his rough satire, dealt about on the varlets of the churchman entirely for their master's amusement. He imitated their somewhat staggering gait, and

the stuttering utterance which was the natural consequence of their excess. He quizzed them without mercy ; and when they strove to reach him with the end of their quarter-staffs or the thongs of the whips they carried for the service of the canon's mule, Jacob Parigault twisted and turned from them, or upon them, with attitudes as grotesque as theirs were awkward, and in a way very often to leave them sprawling in the dirty streets. But as the party approached Cut-throat Cross, a more serious air was mingled with the fooleries of the *sot-souris*.

"Brother," said he, taking by the arms a fat and fuddled varlet, who could by no means walk straight, so often had he put hand to head during the evening, "my worthy friend, you would do well to cross yourself, as well as your legs, in this unholy spot. Sign, sign quickly, Martin, for God preserve us ! the devil himself comes here at night, and his comrades are the dead felons whom he slips down from the gibbets, and the Jews—miscreants whose very mention makes my hair stand on end !"

The canon laughed less faintly than before, and his man Martin began in good earnest to cross himself as the fool went on.

"Saint Nicholas save us ! what was that ? What a tall black figure ! Ah, it is gone — easy enough for it ! for mayhap it was some pale thin ghost, or worse still, some demon of hell."

"Hush, hush, good jester," said Father Nicholas, "there should be bounds to wit, even were it broader than thine. These jokes are now out of season and place ; we are entering on Hell's Gap, and I must not be disturbed while I repeat the exorcism against all evil spirits so go on quietly and silently—and hark ye, Martin and Gobert, hold well the bridle, and keep yourselves steady on your limbs !"

"Reverend Father, the road is long and difficult," said one of the varlets ; "would not your reverence help to cheer us as we go with the story of this accursed place ? it will be all over by the time we reach the ruins, and it is there, if your reverence remembers, that you always begin the exorcism."

"Aye do, your reverence," said the fool ; "so that if the devil comes while you are telling the story, and carries away fat Martin, we shall be only one the less, you know."

"Hold thy graceless tongue, Jacob Parigault," retorted the

other ; “ dost not see his reverence is crossing himself before he begins to tell us the story.”

“ Very well, my children, so be it,” said the canon, hemming and hawing, and raising himself up in his saddle, with all the consequential air of a story-teller — the men knew his rage for recounting marvellous events when they asked him to begin the oft-told tale with which they were all familiar. “ Know ye, then, that those ruins through which we are by and by to pass, — safely, I trust, by the blessing of the holy Virgin, the blessed patroness of the town of Cambray, — are those of a strong and massive castle, inhabited many and many a day ago by a baron named Truandre, who was sold to the devil by his own mother, even while he was an infant in the cradle.

“ The traditions of the country tell us, that this miscreant adored the father of evil, and that he committed the most horrid crimes out of love to his false divinity. Maidens were carried off, and treated in a way unbecoming the telling by a man of my cloth. Children were murdered that their fat might be made into diabolical unguents ; and pilgrims, who sought shelter in the castle, were forced to deny the holy name of God, or die of hunger in desolate dungeons — but perhaps, my children, you have heard all this before ? ”

“ Oh no, no, good father,” exclaimed the varlets — their common reply to this common question of the story-telling canon.

“ Or if they have, they forget it, your reverence,” said the *sot-souris*.

“ Well, then, it was particularly against priests, and above all of them, against the Bishop of Cambray, that Truandre was most violent. He treacherously caught many a pious servant of Heaven, and when they refused to betray the place of safety of the church treasures, he used to scourge them till they dropped dead under the lash, or stretched them on burning coals and consumed them by a slow fire.”

“ The holy fathers of the church ! ” cried the varlets.

“ How the fat monks must have burned ! ” muttered the fool.

“ Ay, even so, my children,” resumed the canon. “ But Heaven at last took pity on the afflicted province ; and it came to pass that one day during a violent storm, sent from heaven expressly, no doubt, Truandre and all his creatures were struck dead, and his castle burned to the ground. A couple of ser-

vants alone were saved, not honest fellows like you, Martin and Gobert, but base, polluted wretches worthy of their master.

“ Well ; these two rascallions went to the good bishop, and had the impudence to ask *him*, a Christian priest, to forgive them their sins and pardon their defunct lord, and bury him in holy ground, as became one of his noble lineage. But the bishop having first, as a duty to the church, asked them what they had saved of Truandre’s wealth, and found it was all consumed, piously turned them out of doors, cursed them and their latest posterity, as in duty bound, and caused the body of Truandre to be flung into the castle-moat, close beside a gallows erected to mark the spot. Besides which, he declared excommunicate and relapsed from the holy church whoever touched the accursed carcass, except to spit in its face, or otherwise degrade it.”

“ Served him right ! ” exclaimed the varlets.

“ ’Twas treatment too good for him,” said the fool.

“ Ay, but it was of little need,” continued the canon, “ for no sooner was the body thrown into the ditch, than the earth all around took fire, and threw out flames so fierce and unquenchable that the rains of four successive years could not put them out. A thousand little devils — so says the tradition — were constantly at work pouring oil on the fires of this earthly hell, the approach to which was guarded by a huge green dragon.

“ Night and day were heard the cries of Truandre and his guilty crew. Their spirits were seen attempting to fly from this place of torment, while fiends, armed with pitchforks, shoved them back into the flames. Songs, such as the mouth of man may not repeat, nor his fancy conceive, bursts of atrocious laughter, mixed with the cries of the damned ones. Sometimes even the demons seized on them with their burning hands, and forced them to join in their aerial dances — and when tired of the sport they used to let them drop again into the boiling pit ! ”

“ Warm work, your reverence ! ” said the fool ; but the varlets had nothing to remark at this pause in the story, for they were now close on the much dreaded spot, and their hearts began to sink, and their tongues refused to utter the faintest sound.

“ Thus matters had gone on till this blessed hour,” once

more resumed the canon, "had not the tender-hearted bishop taken compassion on the suffering souls of Truandre and his fellow-victims — besides being very anxious to redeem the place and make it church property. So he sprinkled some holy water on the flames, which suddenly disappeared, after having so long vomited forth all that hell held most hideous — and the marshes around recovered their dingy verdure, and their stagnant and discoloured pools. All that was worth reclaiming was adjudged by due appropriation to become part of the abbey lands; but the name of Hell's Gap has stuck to the place, and in God's truth it may be considered to merit ——"

"Help, help! mercy, mercy! The Virgin save us! Avaunt Satan! Martin! Gobert! Holy father, make haste, begin the exorcism, begin, begin!" and other most voluble exclamations burst out this moment from the fool, who lay prostrate on the road, his torch extinguished, and the affrighted company consequently left in total darkness.

To describe a scene so gloomy and involved is what no chronicler would have the hardihood to attempt.

Jacob Parigault had fallen over some substance of greater bulk than a paving-stone, as the varlets could barely distinguish, without being able to judge of its exact magnitude or nature. The canon's mule made a sudden stop, and had infallibly jerked Father Nicholas right over his head into the road, had not the good man seized a fast hold of the animal's ears, balancing himself the while on its neck, while the frightened varlets each held one of his reverence's legs, convinced that their only chance of safety was in sticking to his skirts, and at the same time keeping him in a position that would allow of his freely repeating the exorcism commanded by the church in such cases.

"What ailest thee, thou jesting ass?" replied the canon to the fool's exclamation. "Is this a place for thy fooleries? Thou hast nearly caused me to keep thy profane company closer than I covet."

"Holy father, take pity on me! I am in the gripe of the devil!" cried the fool.

"Hold thy impious tongue, fellow, nor provoke Heaven's wrath! On, varlets, on! Let this malapert jester follow as he may," said Watermetz, in an unwonted tone of anger.

"Holy saints! He tears me with his claws! He bites me

with his teeth ! Do you not hear his infernal voice ? Cruel Father Nicholas ! ”

The piteous tone with which this was uttered, and the undoubted sounds of a most unchristian voice, fiercely chattering in the direction where the body of the fool was lying, convinced the canon and his followers that it was no joke. One of the men by repeated puffings, restored the light of the torch, from a spark which was not quite extinct, and its lurid gleams falling upon the road showed a very appalling scene.

Jacob Parigault had doubled himself up, his face and knees resting on the earth, afraid to look round or to attempt to rise, while a huge monkey fastened on his back was scratching and biting him unmercifully. Close beside lay the object over which the fool had stumbled. It was the dead and bleeding body of a woman.

Father Nicholas and his followers, almost petrified with fear, attempted to push forward, the canon calling loudly to Martin to flog the mule with all his might, while Gobert drove away the monkey and released the fool.

“ On, on, good varlets ! On from this unholy place, and give notice to the provost of this cruel murder—forward, forward, kind fool ! Pick thy steps, fellow ; there may be more of this loose company ere we get clear of Hell’s Gap ! ”

“ Loose company, indeed ! ” muttered the fool, wiping the mud from his bleeding face with one hand, and waving the torch with the other, while the varlets whipped on the mule, throwing fearful glances around them the while, and Father Nicholas, now settled in his saddle, began in good earnest to repeat, in an agitated tone, the regular form of exorcism against the evil one. But all were again interrupted by the plaintive cries of a child, and in a moment more the helpless little object was discovered lying at some short distance from the body of the murdered woman.

Moved with compassion at this sight, the worthy canon forgot for a moment his alarm, and wrapping the little innocent carefully in his mantle, he carried it home with him ; and his next step was to waken his elderly maiden sister, Madame Bertha, who had lived with and kept house for him for three-and-twenty years.

After a good deal of grumbling, according to her custom when she was at all put out of her way ; after snappishly

asking her brother, "What should she know about children?" after having rapidly run over the list of annoyances, fatigues, watchings, and torments with which such a charge would overpower her, the good lady began to take as much care of the little stranger, and with as much tenderness as the fondest mother could have afforded.

"Well, it *is* a lovely little girl!" said she to Mademoiselle Cunégonde, her waiting-maid and confidant during a quarter of a century. "Her skin is as white as the marble columns in St. Michael's chapel! Run, run quickly and bring some milk; and warm it, do ye see, in the silver pipkin—she is half dead with cold and hunger. How slow you are, Cunégonde! You might have made it in less time! Sweet Saviour be praised for having spared the poor little innocent!—Ah, there you come! Thank God! Now, now! See how the dear little thing devours the food!—There, there, let her sleep! I will keep her here in my own bed, that her sweet little voice may waken me with its first sounds."

But the little girl never awoke during the night, and when Father Nicholas came to his sister's chamber-door next morning after nones, to inquire about the foundling and her new nurse, he learned from Mademoiselle Cunégonde that they were both still fast asleep by each other's side. When he repeated his visit, an hour later, he found Madame Bertha fondling on her knees her new acquaintance, whom she had neatly dressed in clean and simple clothes.

After having patiently listened to his sister's long dissertation on the theory of bringing up children, and on her own peculiar superiority as an authority on the subject, Father Nicholas, in his turn, held forth at some length on the result of the inquiry instituted by the town provost into the circumstances of the last night's adventure.

Judging from her complexion and the fashion of her vestments, the murdered woman was a Bohemian, or gipsy, who was known for some days in the town as gaining her livelihood by showing a monkey, and making it cut capers for the curious and generous citizens. Some of the vagabonds of the accursed suburb where she sought her lodgings, had seen her imprudently display a scantily filled purse. No further temptation was required to make them put her to death. The lacerated state of her ears, from which the massive gold orna-

ments had been torn or cut, left no doubt as to the motives of the crime—the criminals were never discovered.

"No matter what she was—no matter, brother Watermetz," interrupted Madame Bertha, "we at least will not abandon this poor little object. In the first place we must have her christened—which her miscreant mother never thought of, no doubt. Nor have you, brother, I am sure. You are nevertheless a priest, and more than that, a canon!"

Watermetz quietly observed, but did not quail under, his sister's triumphant look.

"Yes, sister," said he at length—"Yes; you will hold her at the font, and I have found a godfather."

"No—no," said Madame Bertha impatiently, "I have chosen the Provost of St. Mary's, and I positively will have no other. In your eye, no doubt, the commonest mechanic in Cambray had been a fit gossip for me!"

"I am then to inform his lordship the bishop that you refuse him for one?" replied the canon with a smile of good-natured importance, mingled with an expression of drollery.

"His lordship the bishop! The bishop, brother! *He* deigns to fill this office? *He*! How did it happen? How did you bring yourself to ask him? Oh, the worthy, the condescending prelate!"

Madame Bertha strove to accompany this speech with a smile of pleasure; but so little were her starched and formal features used to such an expression that all she could accomplish on the present occasion was at best but an equivocal grin.

Some days afterwards the christening took place in the episcopal church, with a parade and pomp that made Madame Bertha's somewhat twisted figure look at least two inches taller. The child was named Lydorie.

The bishop gave a grand christening dinner. The worthy Canon Watermetz, being a great lover of good living, had a habit of paying a visit at times to the kitchen. As he approached it on the present occasion, to make some inquiries about the anticipated repast, he heard a child crying bitterly, while the rough voice of Master Magalouffe, the bishop's head cook, was scolding severely the little culprit.

The canon patronised the cook, and as the latter was pleased to say, honoured him with his familiar friendship. He was now however much shocked to find Master Magalouffe unmer-

cifully flogging his son, who was between five and six years of age, with a half-roasted peacock which he wielded by one of the drumsticks, and thus made a very formidable scourge.

"Holloa! Hold! How is this, Magalouffe?" asked the canon, throwing himself between the executioner and the victim. "What causes this intemperate anger against the gentle Severin?"

"Reverend sir," replied the cook, "if I did not give vent to my rage, I should burst into tears of despair! By Saint Martha, my holy patroness! I never knew suffering like this. For the first time I have disgraced the noble profession of cook!—Have I not cause, Father Nicholas? Look at this peacock! Was ever so fine, so fat, so beautiful a bird spoiled on the spit?"

"Patience, patience, Magalouffe!"

"No—I renounce patience and philosophy in a case like this! Ever since vespers yester-eve my whole establishment has been preparing for this day's dinner—clerks of the kitchen, grooms of the porringer, turnspits and scullions, all! Never was framed a plan more perfect or dignified than mine! Look here, worthy canon—just for one instance—for, Heaven be praised! I am no boaster, or I might give you a dozen—look at these fried slices of venison—or this roasted sucking pig—or this sauce of sweet herbs with Tourraine plums and Greek raisins; or just taste this gilded soup! Most assuredly it is not from vanity I say it, but the world holds only two cooks capable of manufacturing a soup like this—and if it be true that Taillavant, head of the royal kitchen of France, can make it, as undoubted is it that it was I, Jaques Magalouffe, who *invented* it, when I served under that celebrated artist."

"Nay, but Magalouffe!——"

"Nay, nay, reverend father, but hear me—what hands but Taillavant's or mine could properly cut these slices of *pain-primos*, let them imbibe their due time in their bed, so to call it, of honey, white wine, and yolks of eggs—after which fry them to a turn in marrow and lard—due proportions, mind ye!—toss them on the frothing surge without ever letting them touch the bottom—and finally saturate them in a sauce of rose-water, drudged with saffron, sweet spices, and impalpable gold dust?"

This long harangue, broken even as it was by the canon's

interruption, somewhat cooled the ire of the cook ; but it exploded anew at the sight of the fresh peacock brought to him to replace that which little Severin had so carelessly singed.

"A feast like this—like what this should have been," resumed Magalouffe, trembling once more with passion, and raising his voice to its highest pitch, "what it *would* have been but for the villany of this young conspirator, had immortalised me ! And now, I merit nought but opprobrium and disgrace ! What now can I do, but fling aside my white rod of office as episcopal cook, and hide my dishonoured head behind the meanest burgher's kitchen-wench, who puts on a Sunday her bit of beef or her smoked goose into an earthen pot, with a couple of onions and a handful of pepper and salt ! Heaven give me patience !"

"Magalouffe, Magalouffe, I call on you as a cook and a Christian to listen to reason !" exclaimed Father Nicholas, beginning to lose his own temper, while striving to moderate that of another.

"Reason, Father Nicholas ! Is it reasonable to see that degenerate brat of mine studying some scribbled parchment instead of basting my precious peacock ? Cursed be the officious chaplain's clerk who taught him such pernicious knowledge !"

- "What, then, thou canst not read, Severin ?" asked the canon of the weeping boy.

"Alas ! Yes, holy father," replied he, timidly quitting the niche where he had retreated.

"Read !" cried Magalouffe. "Read ! and what will that make of him, let me ask ?"

"A canon of the blessed cathedral—the chaplain's clerk told me so," said Severin, emboldened by the encouraging looks of Father Nicholas.

"Canon, canon ! Insolent young varlet ! Can your reverence forgive him ?"

"Be quiet, Magalouffe. Forgive poor little Severin—come, come, for my sake !" said Watermetz. "Since your son shows such a wish for learning, I will myself take him in charge, and we'll make him, if not exactly a canon, at any rate a chaplain, with a good benefice."

"And is it come to this !" exclaimed Magalouffe in a tone of grief, and at the same time replacing his white cap on his

pate — “A stranger and not my son is to receive from my dying hands the white wand of head episcopal cook !” — and with tearful eyes and woeful countenance, he began to trim, pluck, and skewer up another peacock.

From the day following, and for fourteen successive years, Father Nicholas kept his word ; and Severin became and continued his intelligent and industrious pupil.

CHAPTER II.

AND now we must imagine ourselves in the episcopal reign of Monseigneur Godefry de Fontaine, in the year 1320.

Severin had become by this time a fine-looking, a gentle, and most pains-taking young man. The good canon Watermetz, who remembered well what a wild young fellow he himself had been at nineteen years of age, wondered at, while he admired, his pupil, studying the not very attractive science of theology with such extreme ardour and untiring perseverance. The fervent piety of Severin, and his holy ambition of entering into orders, smoothed every difficulty in the way. His only recreation was to devote three or four hours of each day in copying missals and rare manuscripts, and in colouring the fantastic ornaments of those illuminated writings. In this species of employment he had acquired an extraordinary degree of perfection, which the most celebrated rubricators might have envied. Father Nicholas was indebted to the exertions of Severin's talent for a library of fourteen thick volumes,—a literary treasure of no small value at the epoch at which we write.

During the fourteen years which we have just jumped over with such a bound, Madame Bertha had ceased to reside with her brother, having gone to live with, and give the full benefit of her acidulated kindnesses to, a female relation near Mons, who was infirm and old, and who had declared that whichever of her cousins, no matter in what degree, would nurse her during life, should have all her property at her death.

Madame Bertha had taken Lydorie with her to her new abode. They seldom came to Cambray, although her affection

for her brother, as strong as it was sour, had not in the slightest degree changed its quality. When the worthy canon lost the society of his sister as a constant resident, he persuaded (easily enough) Severin's father to allow him to take the boy wholly to his own care, and he accordingly brought him home as one of his family.

As soon as—and Dame Bertha did not think it soon at all—the old relative was dead and buried, the brother and sister were once more united under the same roof. Severin was just then waiting the sacred permission to enter on the first grade of his intended holy calling; and he sighed for it with the impatience with which one longs for the chief object of their earthly wishes.

Madame Bertha's pupil—thanks to the mixture of contradiction and kindness, both in their turns exaggerated, of the good old lady,—was far from possessing the tranquillity of taste and equability of temper which distinguished Severin. By turns frolicsome and docile, silent, animated, gentle, and impetuous, she was sure to please every taste at times, and therefore to be a general favourite. The good canon was foolishly fond of her. Madame Bertha scolded her twenty times between matin and vespers, and kissed her at least as often. The whole family yielded to all her varieties of temper. The canon, his sister, the maidens and the varlets—and Severin like the rest.

Lydorie was always to be seen as was becoming a young person of the first respectability. Never was any pretty girl, with fine blue beaming eyes, more gracefully dressed than she, as she went in the morning to mass, or walked in the afternoon under the double row of chestnut trees which shaded the principal promenade of the town of Cambrai.

One day it so happened, that being particularly struck with a beautifully illuminated missal which Severin was employed in copying, she took the sudden fancy of becoming herself a learner of the art of rubrication; and quickly as the notion was conceived, she insisted on Severin beginning to give her lessons, in laying on the colours, and intermixing the stripes and spots of gold foil on the snow-white vellum pages.

During the lessons which followed in daily succession, it became necessary that Severin should guide, with his accustomed fingers, the fingers—not over docile at all times—of the now blooming and beautiful Lydorie. Gay and mischief-loving as

she was at times, she used often to strive to provoke into peevishness her steady and studious instructor, by splashing with large stains of black or blue the fair white margin of the ornamented page. But failing in every attempt to ruffle Severin's temper, or draw a reproach from him, she did not fail, after a while, to remark that either his disposition must be the very best in the world, or her influence upon it the most unbounded. Neither of these notions was a bad recommendation for Severin. Together they made his claim on Lydorie's regard irresistible.

When the daily lesson was over, and Severin once again alone in his chamber, he invariably set himself to prayer. But the instinct of devotion, so lately all in all with him, was now quite overpowered by another, as natural but much stronger. We need scarcely say what it was. It is enough, that in every prayer put up for himself, the name of Lydorie insensibly found a place; and all his lessons of theology were utterly forgotten, in the memory of those in which he acted as teacher instead of learner.

The first effect of the discovery of his true state of mind was dreadful regret. He thought he had committed a budget of mortal sins. He vowed to risk no repetition of his error. Lydorie implored him not to abandon her to her but half-enlightened ignorance. He struggled, excused himself, refused her—but could not resist for ever! In short, her empire over him was completely confirmed.

Thenceforward his thoughts took a totally new direction. The life of a priest began to appear severe, isolated, and unnatural; and when he chanced to see some young burgher taking a nuptial ramble with his younger wife, while perhaps a little urchin trotted beside or gambolled before them, Severin's heart seemed full, a vague melancholy weighed him down, and a wild longing for he knew not exactly what. But whatever was the change towards which nature seemed to urge him, he was at any rate quite convinced that it was not to be found in solitude. He at times thought that he and Lydorie might perhaps discover it together.

And Lydorie, on her part, began to find her lessons of rubrication very much too short; while from a gay and giddy girl she became all at once transformed into a steady, serious, and somewhat pensive young woman. Sitting by the side of her

instructor, she listened with a pleased and patient ear to all he taught. She no longer blotted the vellum, nor mixed the colours for mischief's sake ; and when Severin read out to her some interesting story of sacred history, her eyes used at times to fill with tears, and her bosom to heave with sighs, particularly at the page of Holy Writ which records the loves of Jacob and Rachel. Now, whether by accident or, perhaps, by instinct, which we have found guiding Severin before, it happened that almost every day he opened his bible at that same place—and always found, as well he might, something new to admire and descant on in that beautiful and touching passage.

And now the festival of the Holy Trinity had come round ; and the epoch fixed for Severin's reception in the earliest order of priesthood was not far off—it was for the day of the Nativity.

The unfortunate student wept tears of sorrow, not unmixed with remorse, at the anticipation of this day, long so ardently looked forward to.

In the fourteenth century, the festival of the Trinity was celebrated by a procession of prodigious pomp, all through the district called the Cambresis, but particularly in the chief town. All the guilds of the corporation bore a part in this ceremony ; trumpets blowing, colours flying, and each burgher dressed in the gaudy pourpoint, cloak, plume, and covered cap distinctive of his trade or calling.

After the ceremony, the various guilds carried in great state to the houses of their several chiefs the finely decorated effigy of the blessed patron whom they respectively invoked ; that is to say, St. Pelagie for the weavers and mercers ; St. Fabien for the cross-bow makers ; St. Sebastian for the archers' company ; St. Maur for the bakers' ; and Our Lady of Mount Carmel for the mulquiniers.

On Trinity Monday, in the aforementioned year 1320, after the procession had gone the whole course of the town of Cambray, the right reverend Bishop Godefroy returned into the episcopal palace, somewhat fatigued, but still not forgetting to give his parting benediction to the guilds at the foot of the draw-bridge. Then rose upon all sides a loud noise of trumpets and viols ; and shouts were raised from thousands of voices in honour of St. Maur, St. Pelagie, St. Fabien, and the rest.

Above all these vociferations, however, arose that of the mulquiniers. "Our Lady! Our Lady!" was heard dominant in the clamour, for Cambray did not boast of a guild so rich or so numerous as that, inasmuch as the dressing of fine threads was a trade of great profit, and required an immense number of hands to fitly prepare the material before it passed into those of the weavers. And of all the noisy throats that shouted honour and praise to their blessed patroness that day, there was not one that was outnoised by the voice of our old acquaintance Jacob Parigault, the *sot-souris* of the mulquiniers. Fourteen or fifteen years had not in the least degree lessened his love of fun or talent for foolery, while they had considerably increased his impudence. Long prescription, which is the licence of a great many other placemen and the privilege of their buffooneries, had established all his rights to be insolent and troublesome to the whole town of Cambray, and even up to the gates of the bishop's palace.

With the lower part of his body inclosed in a wooden horse, on which one might have sworn he was really mounted—for a housing of red cloth covered his legs and fell down to the ground—the *sot-souris* trotted and galloped, or at least appeared to do so, through the crowd, and scattered about his gross jests and vulgar repartees, the best of which were inspired by his conscious impunity, and by sundry *bottrines* of wine, freely quaffed at the expense of the corporation. He was encouraged and supported in all his sallies by the shouts of laughter which burst from the mulquiniers, the clapping of hard palms, and every other demonstration of applause.

Madame Bertha and Lydorie, escorted by Severin, looked on from a little mound not far from the drawbridge of the palace, but outside its precincts, on the animated spectacle offered by the crowd. The *sot-souris* recognised the canon's sister, and came prancing round and round her and her young companion, in the hope of receiving the usual slight gratification for his foolery. But he gained nothing by the volts and demivolts, and other grotesque manœuvrings of his wooden warhorse. He saluted over and over again with his long wooden sword, and paid some overcharged compliments, all for nought. Madame Bertha had left her *escarcelle* (the portable pocket of those days) at home.

Disappointed, and a little irritated at Madame Bertha's con-

temptuous indifference and vinegar-looks, the half-drunken *sot-souris* began to fling familiar and rather impertinent jokes at the old lady. Severin mildly entreated him to be more respectful.

“Saint Nitouche ! patron of mine ! protect and guard me !” cried Parigault, making a thrust with his wooden sword, half in jest half in earnest, at the young man. “So, my young champion, you have attained my honour, and touched the tip of my scutcheon ! We must enter the lists. Very well, be it so ! I am ready. And as for you, you must, by way of casque, clap one of the cook your father’s copper pots on your head, —and a kiss from the gipsy’s daughter here shall be the prize for the victor !”

At these outrageous words Lydorie blushed deep with mingled shame and anger, and she could not restrain her tears ; for she saw that the insult offered her was greatly relished by the crowd. In fact, she was not extremely popular, for her high spirit had at times shown itself not to sympathise at all with the low-born or vulgar. Besides which, the burghers were almost constantly at variance, and sometimes at open war with the canons of the cathedral, on questions of privilege, which the chapter was on all occasions endeavouring to diminish in proportion as the people strove to increase them. It was natural enough therefore for the lower orders, of which the crowd was now chiefly composed, the guilds having begun to march homewards, to enjoy the rough bantering of the fool, at the expense of the sister and the dependants of a canon.

Severin, anxious to put an end to this disgraceful and vexatious scene, and to relieve Lydorie from her annoyance, gently strove to make way through the crowd. But instead of facilitating his retreat, or showing any consideration for his companions, the people opposed their passage ; and the *sot-souris*, in the heat of his insolence, threw his arm round Lydorie’s neck, and made the air resound with the gross echo of an audacious kiss.

This outrage was instantly followed by a well-directed blow from Severin’s fury-nerved and rage-propelled fist, which knocked the fool clean down, covered his face with blood, and sent him and his horse most ludicrously tumbling, in a style which no Centaur ever before exhibited. Yet nobody laughed.

At the sight of their beloved buffoon so rudely handled, the

rabble sent up a yell that carried fright to the inmost heart of the well-disposed—for it was a voice well known.

"Aie ! aie ! we are mrudered ! we are murdered !" the regular battle-cry of a Cambray mob, was now heard on all sides ; while a desperate rush, defeating its own object, was made against Severin ; but before any of the too-anxious mob could seize upon him, through the impediments made by the general attempt, the bishop's archers hurried to his rescue, and a fearful *melée* was the instant consequence.

The rabble and the discontented burghers, who soon joined in the riot, being unarmed, came badly off in the contest. The daggers of the archers cut and thrust with serious effect, while the mob could only return awkward thumps of very unscientific fists, or blows of occasional bludgeons, with which, however, they dealt severe punishment here and there.

In the mean time, Severin took advantage of the tumult to pass the drawbridge and enter the castle, with his double load ; no easy matter, for while one leant on him with a gentle, but agitated pressure, embarrassing every step by the excitement she created, the other was a complete dead weight, having nearly lost her senses from fright.

The archers, fiercely assailed by large reinforcements of the people, now slowly retreated. Thanks to their steady front, they got clear off with only a few broken heads or bruised limbs, and succeeded in raising the drawbridge without leaving one of their comrades in the power of the mob. But the latter, inflamed to madness by the sight of at least thirty of their killed or wounded friends, determined on other means of vengeance, with all the wild ferocity of not only those, but what ought to be better, days.

It was but the affair of an hour, in spite of the admonitions and threats of the grand bailiff, to seize on all the barriers of the town, and tear down the toll-houses, while the great bell of St. Gery sounded the tocsin to all the country round. Four or five thousand desperate rioters were soon assembled, with the sole object of plunder and devastation. The first place of any force attempted to be carried was the fort of Selles, which made small resistance ; next, the town-house, where the bailiff and the magistrates, paralysed by fear,—the sure characteristic of all corrupt corporations in the hour of trial—sat arguing and suggesting while they should have been out in the streets

at the head of their police, facing the danger which in nine cases out of ten flies before the boldness it would strive to appal, and giving example and heart to the better order of burghers, who only want such on like occasions, to arm and fight in defence of their property and good order.

The town-house, the abbey of St. Hubert, the mansions of the grand vicar, Canon Watermetz's cousin, and of the arch-deacon of Brussels, with those of several of the canons who lived in the city, were soon a prey to the flames, first being pillaged from garret to cellar.

In the bishop's palace all was confusion and dismay. The alarmed prelate held an irregular council of all who chose to give advice or suggest a means of good. But of the hall-full of functionaries, lay or clerical, not one seemed able to do any thing better than heap abuse on poor Severin, the innocent cause of this alarming revolt.

And now the burghers, in more regular approach, but still bellowing furiously for revenge, rushed onwards, carrying ladders to scale the walls of the palace defences. There were but poor means of resistance against these formidable preparations; for the armed guard within the palace was never considerable, and the capture of the Fort de Selles gave the enemy almost the command of the place.

But even had there been men enough to defend the palace, it did not contain more than two days' provisions; and suppose even that it could hold out so long, it must then be surrendered at discretion, unless, indeed, the chieftains of the bishop's free-fiefs, as they were called, came to his reverence's assistance. But there was little reliance to be placed on the allegiance of these turbulent marauders, who were more likely to side with the people than check the revolt.

But a sudden and chance circumstance happily changed this desperate state of things; and the instrument of the change was no other than the original cause of the evil.

Jacob Parigault had been carried home by some of his mob patrons. They chose to consider him at least three quarters dead, although he had been only stunned by Severin's blow, and the stupefaction which followed was entirely caused by intoxication; so that when, after a couple of hours' sleep, his wife told him all that had passed, and much of what was passing, the shrewd buffoon rapidly saw the reality of his own

position, and seriously reflected on the probable consequences that would accrue if matters went on much further in the way they were going.

"How will all this end?" thought the *sot-souris*, not much wishing to revert to the way in which it began. "Why thus—they may take and sack the palace, and kill the bishop—Good! Then comes the emperor, furious and grasping—So! Next, all the rich burghers get clear out of the scrape, by the force of sundry bags of golden crowns—Well! After that, the mass of the rioters are pardoned—it would be impossible to hang them *all*—Excellent! And then, what is to become of me? An example must be made—the bishop's honour appeased—the emperor's dignity avenged—Very well! What so easy as to gibbet poor Jacob Parigault? Who would say a word in favour of the *sot-souris*? He would never be missed, for the world has fools enough to fill his place! My wind-pipe swells at the thought of it! No, no, the gallows in Cut-throat Cross shall not see my body dangling on it, if my poor wit holds good—away, away!"

Parigault was making ready to sally forth, all the while he was soliloquising; and he was soon capering and prancing, fresher than ever, on his wooden horse, in the midst of the mob, and under the walls of the palace. The crowd hailed him wherever he appeared with shouts of welcome and bursts of laughter; and the ludicrous gravity with which he acted the character of general-in-chief, amused the observers so much, that it turned their attention away from the main object of their business there; and not a ladder was attempted to be placed against the ramparts.

Thus gaining time, the *sot-souris* turned in his mind the best means of persuading the citizens to abandon the intended assault, when the accidental circumstance before alluded to came to the aid of his projects, and he quickly availed himself of it. And it must be here remarked, that the richest and most sensible of the burghers, among whom were Master le Baudain, and Master Eustace de Dinault, saw the revolt with sore affliction. They knew well that their pockets would have to pay the damage when the emperor came to the aid of the bishop, which he assuredly would, for he swore on occasion of the last riots, by his hopes of Paradise and by the relics of his saint, that he would make the heaviest purse in Cambray hang

loose and flabby, if the citizens again provoked him ! The worthies just mentioned were, therefore, much delighted to see the ready-witted Parigault again appear, and they took care to encourage his evident disposition to settle matters quietly, when both his and their object was marvellously facilitated by a new arrival on the tumultuous scene.

Little imagining what had happened in the town, and believing that the procession of the guilds alone had caused the large assemblage in the neighbourhood of the palace, Magalouffe approached by a narrow street leading up to the bishop's residence, riding quietly on his mule in his usual attitude of consequential ease. Behind him rode two clerks of the kitchen, leading each two sumpter horses laden with provisions, which the learned cook had himself sallied out that morning in search for, in various villages of the neighbourhood, each celebrated for some particular object of provender. And as his mule ambled on, he profoundly cogitated on the most palatable manner of doing justice to a magnificent salmon-trout which he carried in a basket on his crupper, unwilling to entrust to any other carriage the finest fish that he had ever known to be taken in the Scheldt.

He ended, however, with the resolution of serving up the trout with a sauce of sweet almonds, white-wine, and hydromel ; when he was roused up by the well known voice of the *sot-souris*, who called out to him loudly :—

“ Welcome, welcome, thou king of the kitchen ! But more welcome still, in thy capacity of peacemaker — welcome brother ambassador ! ”

Magalouffe repulsed the buffoon with all his accustomed disdain ; but the latter, redoubling his volubility, and capering close to the cook, made it appear to the crowd, in the midst of which they now were, that he and Magalouffe were closely whispering together ; while, in fact, the tormented cook was only heartily cursing him, and ordering him to go about his business. But Parigault, raising his hand for silence, as if he were going to proclaim the result of a secret conference, exclaimed, —

“ List ! burghers, list ! His reverence the lord bishop, satisfied with the frolicsome feats already done—and wishing that we might all repose from our merry-making, has sent, as you see, his head cook, armed with full powers to treat with

your head fool—not without rich presents such as you witness, as is fitting so serious an embassy on so joyous a day.

“His reverence is slightly of opinion—and perhaps you will all agree with him—that good humour and jollity have gone a trifle too far—but in consideration of Easter sports, nothing that has passed to-day is to be remembered to-morrow;—that is positively stipulated between us two;—is it not, very worthy brother? Is it not, most excellent plenipoten-tiary?”

With these words he threw his arms round Magalouffe's neck, to the infinite increase of mob merriment. The cook prepared to reply, and then to shake off the fool; but the latter strained him so close that he could not stir, and stifled all his efforts to make himself heard by loud calls on the people to the following effect:—

“Now, away with you all, men, women, and children—home, home! Take care that the men-at-arms of the lord of Mivart, who are now galloping full speed towards the city, don't come too fast for ye! Away! and my blessing be with ye all!”

With these words he made many grotesque imitations of the bishop's manner of blessing his riotous flock. The well-disposed burghers followed up his efforts, by rapid reasonings with the people, already tired with their excesses, and agreeing that they had gone too far.

“Right! right! Wise men all, follow the fool's advice! Home! home! Long live his reverence the bishop!” and the like cries of peace now rose up on all sides. The crowd dispersed with inconceivable rapidity; and many a bold fellow, throwing behind him looks of inquiry and alarm for the threatened men-at-arms, hurried into his house or hovel, being more anxious to bar his own door than to break open those of the bishop's palace.

A deputation from the town waited on the bishop the next morning: and Monseigneur Godefroy de Fontaine, after a more than usually long lecture, granted pardon to the respective citizens, the *sot-souris* included, on the following conditions:—

1st. That the provost of the town, in presence of the bailiff

and forty burghers, should forthwith procure and return to their true owners all the pillaged property.

2d. That the town should pay a fine of two thousand *livres tournois*, are imbursement for the damage by fire and otherwise, and that ten burghers were to remain hostages till the fulfilment of the clause.

3d. That a hundred burghers, in white shirts, and tapers in hand, should march bare-footed round the town, and do public penance in the episcopal church.

4th. That no guild should henceforward carry a standard without the express permission of the bishop.

5th. That the bells of St. Gery's church, which had sounded the tocsin of revolt, should be unblest, and muffled up for the space of a whole year.

"Hard conditions—cruel hard, Master Eustace!" exclaimed Le Baudain to his brother burgher, as the bishop's secretary read the above terms of accommodation stated to the deputation. "What must we do?"

"Accept and sign, accept and sign, brother Baudain! and not a moment to be lost either.—If the troops of the free-fiefs pour into town, as they have been doing all the morning, we are ruined. The emperor will soon be at the heels of the feudal lords, as the lion follows the jackal when prey is to be run down."

"But two thousand *livres tournois*, friend Dinault!"

"No matter, though it were ten! Our privileges, brother! our monopoly! Come, come, brother, think of those—accept and sign, sign quickly, brother.—Eh! what sounds are those? Trumpets, again! hark to the clattering of the cavaliers as they come in, the free fiefs at their head!"

"St. Mary guide me! 'Tis true enough, Master de Dinault: Oh, 'tis a grievous sum, hard, a hard condition! Three hundred at least will fall to my share! Eh! what a clangour and clashing is there! What is that, what is it, Master Eustace?"

"'Tis the bloody lord of Quesnil with his archers and men-at-arms, that's all," replied Dinault drily.

"The fierce and freebooter lord of Quesnil! The holy martyrs be our speed!" exclaimed the avaricious old citizen. "The pen, the pen, brother Dinault! There—I have signed—we are well off, after all."

"I think so too," said Dinault, placing his mark, for he could not write his name; and the rest of the deputies gladly followed his example.

And thus ended the memorable riot, distinguished in the records of the town by the quaint title of "The Trinity Troubles."

CHAPTER III.

AMONG the most distinguished qualities of first-rate cooks, there was one which Magalouffe possessed in uncommon perfection, and that one was punctuality. At the first pull of the cord which gave to the dinner-bell that longed-for sound, so dear to the hungry lovers of good cheer, who abounded in the episcopal palace, Magalouffe and his various assistants were invariably ready to place the first dish on the table. Never, no never once, had he earned the reproach of causing the appetites of their reverences, the feasters, to wait; no, not for as long as the chaplain could chant an extra *Ave*. And never had the intendant of the palace to ask, "Are we ready, Master Magalouffe?" The smoking soup tureen spoke for itself and saved him the trouble.

Now it so happened that four days after the important events mentioned in the last chapter, the varlet in waiting pulled the bell-cord, and sounded the cheering summons to the mid-day repast. The bishop came in, in due form of state, preceded by his chaplain and ordinaries, and followed by the rosy-gilled canons and others who had the honourable privilege of a seat at his dinner-table. But great was the astonishment of all, on perceiving the board unfurnished with edibles—a desolate blank, with the exception of the white rolls, or *pains-taillors*, placed beside each cover, and the furnishing which was in the province of the groom of the cupboard, rather than that of the cook.

And well may be imagined the haste and hurry, the bustle and the fluster, with which the half-horrified intendant scudded along the corridors and passages between the refectory and the kitchen of the episcopal palace.

Magalouffe, the while, like one struck by the hand of Heaven

sat stultified in a corner of his kitchen, unable or unwilling to reply to any of the anxious inquiries for orders put to him from his numerous auxiliaries. And many a whisper of wonderment went round these savoury satellites of the great luminary thus eclipsed. Much did they marvel as to the nature of the trouble that could so have overcast him. Great indeed must it be, thought they, for never before had grief—not even for the death of his wife—caused him to omit a particle of the important duties of his office.

The voice of the intendant, tremulously demanding the cause of the alarming delay, made Magalouffe jump up from his deep reverie; and with amazing promptitude and presence of mind he gave his orders to his subalterns, so as that in much less time than might have been expected a dinner was served up—good in comparison to that which a less celebrated artist might be proud to furnish, but certainly unworthy the fame of Magalouffe.

His business done, he gave himself freely up again to his sorrows; and sinking on a seat, covered his hot face with both his greasy hands and wept bitterly.

“Why, Magalouffe!” said the compassionate intendant; “this is too bad—’tis unmanly so to afflict yourself for a dinner being a little too late. A very venial offence this, my good friend, and you weep as if you repented a mortal sin. Remember, as his reverence the lord bishop often says, citing the Holy Scriptures, ‘It is written, the wise man falls seven times in one day.’”

“Ah, Master Intendant! my grief is indeed great, and good cause have I for it! By the blessed St. Martha! if I knew one in the whole district of the Cambresis who was fit to hold the white wand of episcopal cook, I would this hour resign it into his hand, and I would hasten to fill in some Carmelite convent, where they eat only roots plain boiled in water, the degraded functions of a brother vegetable dresser!”

The intendant made a new attempt to console Magalouffe, but the reader will remember that it was not his humour to be stopped short when his heart was full or his passion high.

“O, why, why,” continued he, “did it not please Heaven and my Holy patroness to keep me firm in my first intention of teaching my son the noble science which has gained me such fame? Instructed by me, he might have handed down

the name of Magalouffe from generation to generation ! He might have been episcopal cook ! And tell me, Master Intendant, where is a prouder title to be found than that which I bear, and which gives rank and precedence among the twenty-four free-fiefs of the bishopric, and confers the privilege of treating of the feudal affairs, civil as well as criminal, of his reverence ? * Accursed be the officious interference of Canon Watermetz ! His reverence the lord bishop has awhile ago struck me to the heart, touching this ill-starred son of mine. He heaped on him the harshest epithets, and swore—no his reverence did not swear an oath but he looked one—that little was wanting to make him refuse to Severin his promised letters of ordination. Yes, yes ! It is to me he said that—aye and more—to me who have reached my sixty-fourth year without ever before being disgraced by a reproach for me or mine ! Oh ! why did Father Nicholas ever drag the boy from his nook in this comfortable kitchen ? What if he had scorched fifty peacocks, more or less, what matter ! If he had never taken to those foolish studies that bring us nothing but disgrace, he had learned his trade, and the name of Magalouffe had been unpolluted ! ”

“ Nay, nay, worthy Magalouffe, his reverence may be mollified ! ” said the intendant.

“ Mollified ! Do you think, then, I would condescend—— ”

“ Hut ! tut—you go too far, Master Magalouffe. ”

“ No, Sir Intendant—the bishop himself allows that I am right—he has acknowledged his error, and strove to repair it by promising to ordain my son to-morrow. Praise be to his reverence for his gracious intentions—you need say nothing to him of what has passed between us—but his reparation comes too late ; I shall never recover the injury done to my honour ! ”

After Magalouffe had thus unburthened himself, he retired to his private apartments, and sent to summon his son to an interview. Severin soon arrived. He looked flushed and agi-

* The twenty-four free-fiefs (*francs-fiefs*) were the great provost of the palace, the *maitre-d'hotel* in ordinary, the master of the hunt, the grand master of the fisheries, the grand butler, the master of the ceremonies, the comptroller, the head cook (*grand cuisinier*), &c. &c.

“ The great bailiff,” says Carpentier, “ chief of the *haute-cour* of the palace, was authorised, when the case required, to summon the twenty-four free-fiefs to debate on the civil, criminal, and other affairs which concerned the jurisdiction of the chieftain.” It is not clearly specified in this quotation whether the cook and the rest had a right of interference in ecclesiastical matters.

tated. He had just come from a long and animated *tête-à-tête* with Lydorie. Kneeling, as was customary, at his father's feet, he asked his blessing, which being duly granted, he modestly inquired for what purpose he was favoured with the infrequent order to wait on his parent?

Magalouffe drew himself up with a certain assumption of dignity which never sat worse on him than when he was confronted with his son, who, he could not help acknowledging, was of a much higher order of humanity than himself. He however began a fluent enumeration of all the bishop's complaints, adding a few of his own suggestions. His voice, which he strove at first to pitch in the due key of paternal solemnity, grew insensibly from low and deep to high and harsh; and having continued for some time in that tone, it suddenly dropped again to what he meant for tenderness, but which was at best but an artificial whine, somewhat like a fanatical ranter, who, after thundering forth a description of hell, concludes his sermon with a faint-toned blessing. Thus it was that Magalouffe wound up his tirade with an announcement of the bishop's benign intention of ordaining the culprit on the morrow.

"Father," said Severin, in a timid but firm tone, "I can never become a priest."

At these daring words he raised his eyes, and he was much emboldened by observing a total absence of anger in his father's countenance.

"I never can—I never will be a priest," repeated he, with less diffidence and more decision.

At every word so uttered, a torrent of balm seemed to pour itself over the erewhile excited feelings of Magalouffe. He could not speak; but thus ran on his thoughts as he gazed on his son.

"Oh, it is too much! My blessed patroness, St. Martha, has at length taken pity on the sorrow of her unworthy servant, and inspired the heart of my boy with the thrice blessed wish to become a cook, like his father! He is, to be sure, a little too old—but never mind! I will so work at him, that in four years he shall be the second best cook in the Cambresis!"

"I am deeply in love with a young maiden," continued Severin, "and we have just now plighted our troth, and promised ourselves to each other for life and death."

"Thou shalt have her, my boy! She shall be thine, I promise thee! Oh, my son, my dear Severin, what would I not do, what not sacrifice to see thee thus fairly renounce thy foolish learning and fantastic notions, for the solid honour of becoming a cook!"

"You are mistaken, father, I have no intention, no want of becoming a cook to secure myself a fair subsistence. My skill as a rubricator will always suffice for that, and even allow me to provide comfortably for her whom I adore, my beloved Lydorie."

"Lydorie! Lydorie!" exclaimed the father, almost frantic with vexation and rage, "What! a base-born gipsy girl—the child of a——of an outcast reprobate, odious to God and the saints!—Listen, Severin! If ever you again utter a word or breathe a thought of this infamy—if you ever again name the name of that wretched girl, I curse you on the spot! Enough! leave me!"

Neither the tears, the entreaties, nor the despair of the young man could produce the least effect on the old one—if, indeed, they did not the more exasperate him. He ended the interview by driving Severin from his door, with orders never more to appear in his sight.

Severin, indignant as he was, nevertheless returned with a heavy heart to the apartments of Canon Watermetz.

When Lydorie heard from him the recital of his father's cruel obstinacy, though Severin softened down all his grossness towards her, the too sensitive girl fainted in her lover's arms. And when the nearly as agitated youth succeeded in bringing her to herself, she burst into a flood of tears.

But in this moment of misery there was for Severin an exquisite delight—an essence which turned his whole cup of bitterness to balm; for Lydorie, for the first time, lavished on him the most tender epithets, without a feeling of reserve, and returned his warm embraces by others not less warm. Her head dropped on his bosom, and her hand was locked in his. Thus passed the remainder of that day, of such mixed suffering and joy.

At last it was absolutely necessary that they should part. Severin retired to his chamber. His feelings underwent a thousand fluctuations. "She loves me—and I must quit her! She loves me—and I must never see her more! To live

without her is worse, far worse than death ! Live without her .
No, no, I cannot live !”

So did the distracted lover soliloquise ; and then, fevered, empassioned, frantic, he seized a knife, plunged it in his breast, and fell on the ground.

When he recovered his senses, Madam Bertha, the canon, and Lydorie stood by his bed-side, weeping. They had believed him to be dead, having discovered him insensible and bathed in his blood. Father Nicholas, who was deeply versed in the secrets of the healing art, attentively examined the wound, and announced, that so far from being dangerous he warranted Severin’s recovery within a week.

Lydorie managed matters so well with the old people, that the office of nurse was entrusted to her ; and she alone watched over her lover during this first night of actual woe.

In the morning, just as she was preparing to quit his bed-side, Madame Bertha being about to relieve her she placed a silver ring upon his finger, and said,—

“As long as thou keepest this ring, my beloved, so long shall Lydorie be thine, faithful and tender to the last !”

The delighted youth strove to reply, in a few words, to these sweet professions ; but before they could find utterance, Lydorie was gone and Madame Bertha in her place. Severin turned round in his bed, and thought of the delicious pledge, and pressed the silver ring to his lips.

The prognostics of the canon were verified. Severin became quickly convalescent. He easily imposed on his simple old friends by attributing his wound to an accident ; and Lydorie found no difficulty in persuading them to yield to her the principal care of the patient—her brother, as she was in the habit of calling him. She passed the chief part of each day in his room.

One day, however, passed over without her making her appearance from morning till night. Need we point out or dwell on the torturing anxiety of Severin during this interval ? At length the good old canon came ; and placing himself by Severin’s side, thus began :—

“A well-a-day ! my poor Severin, is it then come to this ? I know every thing—your father has told me all—your unfortunate attachment. And now I understand how it was you got this unlucky wound. But since Heaven, in its mercy, saved

you from the crime of suicide, it would little become me—a poor sinner like yourself—to show myself more severe. I therefore make you no reproach.—Listen to me now, calmly, my dear boy ! I have spent nearly the whole day in vain efforts to appease your father. He is inexorable. He will neither see you, nor forgive you. On the other hand, his reverence the bishop is furious at your refusal to enter into holy orders. He insists on your leaving the palace, and it is not possible for you to remain in the town after such disgrace as that. And, in another point of view, how could I, my dear Severin, lend my sanction to an attachment disapproved of by your only parent ? You see all your difficulties—you must meet them with courage and patience, and put all your trust in the compassion and the goodness of Heaven !—Here, my child, here in this purse are thirty golden crowns—take them, and keep them safely ! To-morrow you will quit Cambray, with my brother the grand vicar, who is going on a mission from his reverence to the archbishop of Rheims. My brother will find you protectors there, and your great talent as a rubricator will find you an ample livelihood until we may succeed in softening your father's anger.—Farewell, then, my dear child, remember those who brought you up, and who love you dearly—but who have little chance of seeing you more—for we are old, Severin, and God will not be late in calling us to him ! His holy will be done ! Farewell, farewell, Severin ! and for want of a father's blessing, let that of an old man, who loves you like a father, be on your head !”

“Better, oh, a thousand times better ! You are my father !” exclaimed the youth, throwing himself into the canon's arms, and they wept together for many minutes.

The next morning, just at day-break, as Severin took his sad departure from the long-loved home, and when passing under the windows of Lydorie's chamber he gave one longing look upwards, a scrap of parchment fell on the neck of his mule. He caught it with a trembling hand, while his heart palpitated and his eyes swam, and he read the following words, the delicious confirmation of the last that were spoken to him by his adored one :

“As long as thou keepest this ring, my beloved, so long shall Lydorie be thine, faithful and tender to the last.”

Severin arrived duly, without adventure, and in perfectly re-

covered health, at Rheims, where he soon became the particular favourite of the archbishop, who was a great patron of the arts, and particularly of those which related to the embellishment of illuminated manuscripts and missals.

"But why, my good youth," said the prelate on frequent occasions, when he was particularly pleased with Severin's exertions, "why do you so obstinately refuse to follow your early intentions, and enter on the duties of the divine office? If you will even now consent to be ordained, I promise you that before the end of a year, you shall be my private chaplain, with a good benefice—the very best that falls into my gift."

Severin thanked the archbishop, and thanked him with sincere gratitude. But with a deep sigh, he invariably added, that he could not have the hypocrisy to offer to God a heart wholly absorbed by a mortal passion.

CHAPTER IV.

It was, as nearly as possible, two years after the departure of Severin, that Lydorie, sitting in the embrasure of one of the great windows of the palace, and looking out on the sad formality of what was called the bishop's pleasure-garden, recalled the early passages of her life, and wept.

Orphan of a gipsy—adopted from charity—destined one day, perhaps, to live wretchedly by the work of her own hands, when her benefactors should be no more—and now, after two years of hope, no nearer than when she lost him to a union with him she loved so much, and with little chance of ever seeing him again!

What young person on earth more mournfully situated than she? If Master Magalouffe might at length but allow his stubborn tyranny to be softened! If he would but take compassion on his banished son and the wretched Lydorie! But alas, alas! these are delusive notions—nothing will conquer the pride of the old cook. He is now rich; and though not descended from a noble lineage, he has not at least to blush for the mother who bore him!

Why, oh why had not Heaven given, instead of the infamy

of base birth, a rich inheritance, and a noble descent? How happy would she have passed her quiet days with love, retirement, and Severin! How far above wealth and grandeur is affection! But how exquisite to shower all the goods of fortune on those we love!

While Lydorie was wrapt in thought, composed of combinations like these, the servant came to tell her that Madame Bertha required her presence in all haste. Terrified lest her old and ailing protectress might be suddenly taken ill, she rapidly wiped away her tears, and descended to the wainscoted saloon, where she found Madame Bertha and Father Nicholas, in high health and apparently in a mixture of astonishment and pleasure, while near them was seated a stranger, dressed in the hat and cloak which by their cockle-shell ornaments announced the wearer to be a pilgrim returned from the Holy Land. The pale face, sunken eyes, loose gray beard, and long and bony hands of the unknown filled Lydorie with a vague feeling of terror, that made her cling close to the canon, who tenderly pressed her hand in his.

The stranger wept and sobbed aloud, and struck his clenched fist against his breast, exclaiming,

“Lord have mercy on me! Heaven forgive me!”

After some time passed in these exclamations of remorse, he raised his piercing black eyes on Lydorie's face, and said,

“Yes, yes, 'tis she! There is now no doubt—'tis she! Yes, yes! Even if this silver medallion found round her infant neck was not here to prove her identity, it were enough to look on her—she is her mother's living image!”

As the pilgrim spoke thus, Lydorie thrilled with terror and disgust. Her knees shook, and she was near falling to the ground.

“Oh misery, misery!” thought she.—“This pilgrim is my father—the husband of the murdered gipsy woman!”

And already she felt as if torn from the arms of her only friends, and forced to a base and wandering life of beggary and disgrace.

“Show me, show me quickly the small black mark that she bears on her right shoulder,” said the pilgrim.

The almost inanimate girl submitted passively, as Madame Bertha removed the wimple from her lovely neck, loosened the upper agraffe of her pourpoint, and bared the round full

beauty of her alabaster shoulder. When the pilgrim saw the slight mark—the only farther evidence he required—he dropped on one knee, and bending his forehead to the very floor, he said aloud and in solemn tones,

“Noble Countess de Coucy, I do homage to you as my sovereign liege-lady; and I swear by the merits of the blessed cross to remain for ever, in life and death, your faithful vassal, as in duty and allegiance bound!—Oh, right noble lady! grievously guilty have I been towards you—but grant me mercy and pardon! Not for my own sake, for I deserve neither—but for the honour of our noble family—in the name of the blessed Saviour, who, dying on Mount Calvary forgave his murderers—in the name and for the merits of the holy Virgin, take pity on my remorse, and pardon me, ere I rise from before your feet.”

All that Lydorie saw and heard seemed but a dream—a delicious one certainly, but which she dreaded was to be at every moment broken. She listened, fearing to draw her breath, to stir, or move a lip or an eye, lest the most trifling change might break the charm in which she loved to believe herself bound.

And while she thus stood, like one enchanted, and the mysterious pilgrim remained prostrate before her, the worthy Canon Watermetz, almost as much overjoyed as she was, recounted briefly to her by what providential ways all the wondrous discovery came about. The prostrate pilgrim was Lydorie's own uncle, the Lord of Mont Roche. On the death of his brother, Lydorie's father, he caused his niece to be kidnapped and carried off, while a mere infant, by a gipsy woman, who for the temptation of a large reward undertook the diabolical task of stealing the child from its distracted nurse, and promised to carry it away so far that no one in Normandy should ever run the chance of hearing of its fate. The Lord of Mont Roche had been as well, if not better satisfied, that its fate had been disposed of more close to home, provided it had been more surely. A dressed-up piece of wood was put in the cradle in place of Lydorie, and the absent mother, like almost all those on the spot, was deceived by the report of the infant's death. To keep the secret the more securely, the Lord of Mont Roche felt himself forced to put more than one accomplice to death; and loaded with

crimes, he became the possessor of the territory of his late brother, the Count of Coucy.

But remorse weighed heavy on his soul. Sleep flew from his pillow ; and believing himself approaching to his end, he confessed all to a holy man, a hermit of great renown. This pious confidant, having first cured him of his malady, enjoined him to employ all means for the recovery of his niece, to restore her to her possessions, and implore her forgiveness. And, as a preliminary step, he recommended a pilgrimage, which the penitent immediately set about performing.

After some time the Lord of Mont Roche succeeded in obtaining tidings of his niece, known at that time by the title of the Orphan of Cambray ; and from many circumstances which came to his knowledge he had no doubt of her being the person he sought.

Lydoric raised her repentant uncle from the ground ; and in the rapture of her feelings she not merely forgave him the early wrong he did her, but was disposed to drop on her knees, in turn, and thank him cordially for what she was more disposed to consider his free gift than able to comprehend as her own right. The pilgrim soon retired, a weight being removed from his soul, to prepare himself to appear fitly as a renovated member of society, and to conduct his niece to her domains, and procure her recognition by the vassals as their legitimate countess and liege-lady.

“Countess ! Countess ! Vast domains ! Splendid castles ! Men-at-arms—varlets—grooms—followers without number ! maids of honour ! maids of honour !! Dresses sparkling with jewels ! the first place at the justs !

“Oh ! why, instead of a learned clerk and a skilful rubricator, why was he not a gallant cavalier, expert at the use of lance, and sword, and battle-axe ? How delightful would it be to give him from this hand the chief prize of the tournament !”

Such were Lydorie's first ideas—and so did her thoughts run on, during the first sleepless night she had passed since that following Severin's departure from the Bishop's palace.

As soon as it was known in the city of Cambray that Lydorie was all at once discovered to be a noble lady and one of the richest heiresses of Normandy, the only point of contention was to settle who could first succeed in offering her congratulations, and making her presents, which latter few of the

donors would ever have dreamt of throwing away on a poor orphan who might have needed them.

Among the many conversions to a conviction of Lydorie's sudden and amazing worth, Magalouffe's was not the last or the least sincere. He had a true instinct of belief in the virtue of high rank; and he chuckled with delight at the notion of having a countess for his daughter-in-law. He therefore resolved on paying a speedy visit to the new-found lady, to inform her in set terms that he had decided on giving his consent to her marriage with his son. Dressed in his best suit of household livery, which consisted of a gaudy mixture of scarlet, yellow, and white, his pourpoint, his hose, and his short cloak being all of different colours, the long gown and hood of purple camlet hanging in loose drapery over all, he prepared for a visit which he began seriously to consider as one of no common occasion.

"Might it not be better," thought he, as he tucked up the skirts of his gown under his arm and walked slowly along the corridor, "that I had waited till she sent to beg my consent once more, and requested that I would receive her in my own apartment? Yes, that without doubt had been more dignified — though no! perhaps not. I have hitherto treated the poor thing so roughly on every advance, that she dares not make another, and it is magnanimous to unbend, particularly towards a female. Yes, yes, Magalouffe, you are right, you are right! Enough has been done to uphold the paternal consequence and the honour of an episcopal cook. Let me see, therefore, what I can now do for the happiness of these poor children, towards whom after all I have been perhaps too harsh."

When Magalouffe entered the saloon now appropriated to Lydorie's use, she was sitting in familiar conversation with the Canon Watermetz and Sir Eustace de Lens, a nephew by the mother's side of the bishop, and a young French noble of gay and sprightly character and somewhat too dissipated and libertine in his way of life. The small patrimonial estate of this young knight touched on the borders of the county of Coucy. Now it very soon struck him, on hearing of the extraordinary and fortunate vicissitude which had befallen Lydorie, that to blend the two domains together, and surmount his shield with the scutcheon and coronet of a count, would marvellously suit his purposes, and he therefore lost no time

in procuring, through his reverend uncle, a proper introduction to the orphan heiress.

The poor protégé of Father Nicholas and his old sister had never heard the flashy and flowery diction of high-born youths. So no sooner did Sir Eustace commence his flatteries than she felt a flutter of delight quite new to her ; and even after his first visit, she could not avoid making an involuntary comparison between him and poor Severin, who, alas for true love ! knew not how to flirt and talk soft nonsense in this fluent style.

The cunning Sir Eustace marked well his progress, and saw all his advantages over the simple but vain heart of Lydorie ; and he was not long in filling it completely with feelings which nature never intended it to know.

If her heart was tender, her head was weak—too weak to bear without intoxication the high-toned-flavour of the incense which was now every day thrown up before her. To believe Sir Eustace,—and Lydorie firmly believed him—it was not merely on becoming known to her that he discovered her noble origin. The very first time he had seen her passing through the palace court he had been struck with her distinguished air, and had asked who was the noble maiden, whom he was surprised never to have seen among the proud company of dames and knights which he was accustomed to meet at his uncle's table.

Such were the deceitful compliments that caused a smile on Lydorie's lips and a deep blush on her cheeks, when Master Magalouffe came bowing, with his usual self-important air into the room. At sight of the flashy young knight, who sat so familiarly chatting beside Lydorie, the inventor of the golden soup felt some misgivings. He strove to hide his embarrassment under a tone of assumed tenderness and vivacity. But he could not all at once recover his presence of mind, and forgetting all he had intended to say, he burst out rather abruptly as follows, pulling off his crimson cap, decorated with a thick gold band.

“ Ah, Madame Lydorie, Countess, I beg pardon, Countess—what's the title, Father Nicholas ? Ah, madame, it is Severin that will rejoice at this good news, for now there is no obstacle to the marriage—none whatever :—I give my full consent. I only waited for the two years' probation which I made

a vow to St. Martha he should keep. By what day shall I have him back here? I hasten to send him the joyous intelligence, if another—and a fairer hand has not done so already! But if not, I will send off a trusty messenger forthwith. It will cost me two golden crowns—but no matter! By All Saints' day, and we are now only at St. Remy, my messenger will see the steeples of Rheims. I have no fear of his fidelity or his speed—'tis Polycarpe, the cleverest clerk of my kitchen, cunning as a fox and cool as an ambassador."

"What on earth or under heaven is this old mountebank chattering about?" asked Sir Eustace, with a contemptuous smile, which made Magalouffe's heart sink, for he could not stand the ridicule that came from a bishop's nephew.

"He is speaking of a friend of my childhood," answered Lydorie, turning her blushing face aside. She dared not say "of my lover."

Magalouffe attributing the cold reception of his future daughter-in-law—as he considered her—to the anger which she cherished for his former severity, came closer to her, on the side opposite to where Sir Eustace sat, for he was glad to have some separation between them—and asked in a half whisper, "Shall I send for Severin, Madame Lydorie, or will you yourself write to him? Shall we fix for Christmas—or sooner if you like—the wedding that will make us all so happy?"

"The wedding! the wedding!" said Sir Eustace, bursting into a loud laugh. "By the three griffins of my shield! I guess what all this grand secret is about. You are going to give one of your maids in marriage to the son of this cook?"

Lydorie smiled in a manner to give the knight reason to think he guessed rightly—and she blushed again! Alas for true love, once more!—it was for shame of her old affection.

That Magalouffe might not see either the smile or the blush, Lydorie turned her back on him quite. The blood of the episcopal cook rose high at this apparently designed affront. He therefore wheeled round and flounced out of the room, not sorry to escape from the renewed laugh of Sir Eustace, and calling St. Martha to witness that the Countess of Coucy stood as little chance as did the gipsy's daughter of marrying his son Severin! Bursting with rage and foaming with fury, he rushed into the kitchen, "all accoutred as he was," and there a horrid and intolerable scene met his rage-rolling eyes. During his absence a quarrel had arisen—clerks and scullions were

mixed together in a desperate conflict—and three magnificent articles of flesh, poultry, and game, were frizzling and burning before the fire, so blackened and ruined that no turnspit would have had the conscience to place them on the table of a pig-driver.

This was too much for the proud heart and excited feelings of Magalouffe. He attempted to utter a cry of anger and despair. He strove to raise his clenched fist—either in supplication to his saint, or to knock down the nearest rioter—but word and action were incomplete. A stroke of apoplexy laid him low, and a short convulsion terminated his career, on the scene of his many glories, and robed in the honourable livery of his state!

During all these strange and awful events, the faithful mind of Severin was continually picturing, night and day, the former happy scenes of life, and imagining new joys for the future in the dearly loved country of his youth—the scenes of his early, his only love. Every day acquiring wealth by the exertions of his industry, and under the protection of his powerful patron the archbishop, he reckoned on overcoming ere long the obstinate refusal of his father, without which this dutiful son was resolved in the first instance not to make Lydorie his wife. But he was also determined, if his father proved immoveable in his cruel opposition, to solicit an archiepiscopal dispensation, and to make himself happy be the consequences what they might.

“How grievous it will be to me,” thought he, “should I be forced to cause pain to my father! But how sweet to be united to Lydorie—for I love her better than him!”

At last Severin found himself in all ways qualified to undertake the journey back to Cambray. He did not seek any means of announcing his approach to his old friend, or the beloved mistress of his heart. “No,” said he, “I will take her by surprise even though she should faint for joy in my arms, as she once did from grief. How exquisite to kiss her into life again!”

The archbishop was so anxious to preserve his favourite from danger on the road, that he gave him an escort of two men-at-arms, well mounted like himself, to defend him from the manifold chances of robbery or assault, which the dislocated state of society rendered imminent in those days.

Severin at length set out, and trotted along, indifferent to

the annoyances of snow, frost, or rain—for it was the midst of winter—but he went to see his dear loved Lydorie.

A journey of eighteen days brought him to the town of St. Quentin. It was Sunday when he arrived. His first duty was piously to hasten to the celebration of mass in the principal church. Now it so happened that at the very instant of his arrival at the holy edifice a marriage was about to take place. Severin saw by the outward preparations that such was the case, and his heart throbbed with delight in anticipating the day—the quick coming day, thought he,—when he should lead to the altar his own Lydorie, in her bridal dress and bridal blushes.

“Holy saints! how this young bride resembles her! Were it not for those robes of silk and velvet, that hat with golden points—a countess’s coronet—I could swear it was she herself!”

Bursting impatiently through the crowd, he reached the foot of the altar. The armed halberdiers who guarded the aisle thought, from his determined step and mien, that he must be one of the official personages employed in the ceremony, the more so as he was richly badged and dressed in the honourable uniform of rubricator to the Archbishop of Rheims. They therefore gave him free passage.

“It is, it is Lydorie! there is no longer a doubt!” and with the conviction, a pang fierce as though a burning coal had fallen on his breast, fixed him to the spot. He gazed but moved not, until the priest who performed the nuptial ceremony by accident let fall the ring which he was just giving to the bridegroom, to place on the hand of her whose heart was perjured.

Severin darted forwards, and succeeded in picking up the ring before any other could reach it. His whole mind seemed roused into new and instant action by the thought that filled it now. He dexterously pulled from his own finger the silver ring which he had of old received from Lydorie, and he replaced the nuptial one with it. And while the bridegroom joyously placed this damning evidence of her falsehood on Lydorie’s finger, her betrayed lover exclaimed in a sonorous tone of bitterness and mockery, “As long as thou keepest this ring, my beloved, so long shall Lydorie be thine, faithful and tender to the last!”

At the first sound of the well-known voice Lydorie started back, and raised her eyes, and fixed them full on the speaker. Ere the sentence was finished she burst into a flood of tears, and hid her face in her husband's bosom.

"Well spoken, by my faith! fair clerk of his reverence of Rheims!" said Sir Eustace gaily, for he recognised Severin's livery. "What recompense must I give thee for thy apt response?"

But he to whom these light-hearted words were addressed was already out of sight. He had darted through the crowd, and was soon forgotten in the shouts of joy and clamorous congratulations with which the air was filled by the congregation that led the new-married couple from the church; Sir Eustace de Lens holding tenderly the while the fair hand of his bride, whose faltering step and downcast look were attributed to maiden bashfulness instead of womanly remorse.

CHAPTER V.

IN the legends of the olden time, as in the actual life of man, days, weeks, and months, roll on imperceptibly almost; events die away, passions are absorbed, and feelings swallowed up in those which successively arise, like the waves that are followed and swallowed up by those which the swelling of the tide forces after them.

A full year had passed after the event we have just related. St. Quentin had almost lost the memory of the stranger who acted so extraordinary a part at the wedding of the Countess of Coucy; Rheims had nearly forgotten its chief rubricator, in admiration of the one who succeeded him in the archbishop's employ; and Cambray had found other topics to give food to its gossips, in place of the now old story of its orphan and her sudden elevation in the world.

The scene shifts now to Paris. Much is left untold in the legend, of what happened to the actors of our story during the year which we must now consider past and gone. Fancy may fill up the chasm, but what follows may furnish hints enough to the imaginative mind.

And now the curfew-bell had just finished its solemn warning to the citizens. It was a night of deep gloom. Had it not been for the torches here and there glaring in front of the palace of King Philip, the citizens who hurried to their homes had infallibly knocked their heads in passing against the low columns and the gothic arcades, which stood high on the open place called the Grève, a sandy extent of waste ground that was bounded and washed by the waters of the Seine.

A young man came stealthily out from one of the houses in the neighbourhood of the palace. Flinging across his right shoulder the folds of his large cloak, to enable him no doubt to freely use his iron-ferruled stick in case of need, he set off at a quick pace. After having followed the course of the river for some time, he passed opposite the convent and the street of Hieres, and traced the whole length of the Quay of Ormes, of which the street of the *Paon-blanc* and that of Frosgier-l'Anier formed the two limits. He there stopped; and first looking cautiously round to see that there was no observer nigh, he gently clapped his hands together twice.

The door of a small lodge, which flanked a garden-wall of immense height, now slowly opened, and a young woman, enveloped in a long mantle, came forth, and offered her trembling hand to the warm pressure which the young man was ready to give it.

"Severin!" said she, in a faltering voice, and after some minutes of delicious silence, broken only by the echoes of their deep-toned embraces; "My Severin, this meeting must be the last! You must leave this place to-morrow and for ever—for our love is no longer what it was, no longer pure and innocent as in the days of our youth—it has now become criminal, and may, if you fly not——"

The young man only the more closely pressed her in his arms.

"Oh, yes, yes, Severin, we must part for ever! You must forget your Lydorie for ever—forget our early love, my falsehood, my faithlessness—our renewed acquaintance—this criminal passion! Farewell! Farewell, my Severin, for ever!"

While the agitated Lydorie thus spoke, Severin remained as though stupified with surprise and grief. But when she withdrew her hand from his grasp and stepped back for the

fulfilment of the purpose announced by her last words, he sprang forward, clasped her again in his arms and exclaimed, "No, by heavens thou shalt not leave me! nor will I ever quit thee more! Thou art mine—mine own! My love, my mistress, my wife, every thing that is dear and sacred! When, children together, we slept in the same cradle, did not our common friend, the holy man who is now in heaven, did he not say that we were destined for each other? When cruel fate compelled me to leave thee to the temptations of fortune—too powerful for thy innocent heart—didst thou not promise to be mine? Did I not, the day when thou didst confess thy love, hold thee fainting in my arms, thy cheeks wet with tears, thy hand convulsively grasping mine? And if the temptations of a false world, the flattering guile of a selfish man, was too much for thy unsupported faith—if in a moment of weakness thou swervedst aside, hast thou not redeemed the fault? Holy Virgin! is the oath that united thee to *him* more sacred than that which bound thee to me? No, Lydorie, thou art *mine*! Come, come then—let us fly! We shall find in Hainault a sure asylum—nothing can molest us there—all will be joy and peace!"

Lydorie wept bitterly, but made no answer.

"Come, come! let us away!" continued Severin, impatiently yet tenderly, and drawing his weeping companion closer to him. She raised her head, which had been sunk on his shoulder, and exerting all her self-command, she at length spoke.

"Severin," said she, "is it then indeed you who give me this advice, who thus urge me to ruin? Oh, is not misery enough for endurance, without shame? You, who so often told me in happier days that true love was holy virtue, that it lived not but in purity, and died in dishonour? Severin, were I now to follow your mad advice, or listen to your frantic proposal, in how little time would you look on me with contempt—how soon would my presence be a burthen, my very love the nourishment of your remorse! No, my dear, dear friend, we must part!—and for ever! Farewell, farewell!"

She darted from his embrace, entered the pavilion, and firmly closed the door. He felt her withdraw from his arms, he saw her light figure vanish from his side, he heard her words and her steps as she fled along the path within the

garden, yet he neither spoke nor stirred. While he stood thus motionless and dumb, a sudden cry for help roused him from his torpor. A mechanical movement of courage made him grasp his stick firmly, and he hurried off in the direction from which the cries and the clashing of weapons proceeded. He soon reached a retired spot, where by the dismal light of an almost expiring torch he saw a man defending himself with a short sword, against the attacks of two assailants. Just as Severin came running up, shouting encouragement to the single man, one of the cowardly assailants fell to the earth, and the other abandoned the contest and fled.

"May St. George be your speed, good friend! You have saved my life!" said the unknown, in French but with a foreign accent which struck Severin as English—and it was such. "But for you it was all over with me. I am hurt, but I think slightly. Let us leave this place—that runaway may bring others to attack us. Complete your good deed by supporting me to my house, which is hard by—I bleed freely—come on, kind sir! What are you groping for near that writhing wretch, who seems at his last gasp?"

"I am only seeking for my toque, which fell from my head this moment."

"Haste, haste away, good friend—you villain and his fellows will be soon on our track—come, come! I will give you a hundred toques for the one you have lost!" and, the wounded man leaning on Severin's arm, they both walked away.

After some minutes they arrived before a portal, which the stranger quickly opened by a spring; and securely closing it again, he uttered a short sentence of thanksgiving for his escape. A courtyard was soon passed, and then several rooms of a large and handsome house, in which the whole family seemed to have retired to rest. At length they came to a chamber, richly furnished and lighted up, and in which sat a lady of noble mien, but whose countenance was strongly marked with a melancholy expression.

At sight of the stranger, pale, almost staggering from faintness, and covered with blood, she uttered a scream, and flew towards him, with every mark of agitated affection. Severin heard the following conversation, but understood nothing of it, for it was in the English language.

"'Tis nothing, Isabella — I feel that the wound is but slight — compose yourself!"

"Oh, Aymond! what wretch has done this?"

"Your kind brother, Charles, the handsome and bountiful, King of France, by the grace of God! He must have all his titles from me on occasion of this ceremony of assassination," said the wounded person in a bitter and sarcastic tone.

"Can Charles have been so base?"

"Aye, Isabella, aye! Two men bearing his household livery, and one of them of high rank — for I saw his glittering star and collar as I struck him down — have just waylaid and wounded me, and but for this young man's assistance I had now been without life and you without a protector."

The lady threw a look full of gratitude on Sevrin.

"But this danger is not the only one which besets us," continued the stranger. "Frightened by the threats, or bought by the gold of Hugh Spencer — that bitter enemy whom, by God's grace, I will one day pay for this! — your brother has signed a treaty by which he pledges himself to deliver you up again to Edward — and what is the vengeance which the tyrant king of England has in store for the wife who left his arms for mine? Need I dwell on this, or rouse your fears? As for me, Isabella, this attempt proves that there is no intention that I should accompany you to England. My county of Kent is too rich a heritage to allow those who despoil me of it to let me live!"

"Oh, Aymond! for myself I fear not Edward's revenge or my own suffering — but to snatch thee from this peril, say, what must be done? What is our resource?"

"Instant flight — nor is even that sure. I know we are beset with bravos and assassins — but we must risk something to escape from worse."

"And where turn our steps — and when?"

"To Flanders — this very night, this very hour, my Isabella, or it may be too late. My faithful Harrys is already on before — I warned him to be ready, for I suspected what was coming. He is at a few leagues' distance, with some fifteen or twenty English men-at-arms, devoted fellows, but whom the jealous fears of your brother would not suffer to be lodged within the walls of Paris. Once with them we shall be safe. We may then easily reach Hainault, where Count John will be sure to give us protection and succour."

"And how, Aymond, to pass the intricate ways of the city on a night so gloomy as this?"

"'Tis not easy—the scoundrel guide sent to me by Harrys fled when the murderers attacked me."

With these words the Earl of Kent turned towards Severin, who had stood a silent observer and uninformed listener of what was done and said. To the questions, whether he knew the streets of Paris well enough to find out the road to Hainault in the dark? he readily answered "yes;" and a heavy sigh accompanied the word, for he thought of his own late project of flight.

"Put me and this lady safely on our route, kind comrade, and I will reward you well."

"I want no reward—I am ready to do you this small service."

"Away, away, then! and God and St. George hold us in their keeping! Now, Isabella, courage and energy! Go, seek your son, and the most valuable of your jewels—one casket only, for we must not be encumbered. I and this good youth will soon saddle three horses—and then all is ready!"

After a short time, spent in washing away the blood and applying some hasty dressing of lint to his wounded side, the earl hastened to the stables with Severin. The queen of England was quickly ready, with her beloved son in her arms—her dearest treasure. In as short a time as it was possible to employ on such an occasion, the party was fairly out, and in such speed as prudence commanded them to use. At first they went at a slow and steady walk, in order not to excite suspicion or alarm to the patrols of archers and halberdiers who might be encountered in the narrow streets; but once the gate of the city passed, and that was accomplished without hindrance, they pushed forward at a good round trot; and when the paved faubourg was cleared and the sandy road alone beneath their horses' feet, a smart canter brought them quickly out of all danger. But it was nearly daybreak before they felt themselves to breathe freely. Silence was natural to their respective states of mind. Few words were spoken, except a kind and soothing inquiry at times, from Isabella to her lover, when he could not suppress a groan from the pain caused by his wound. The child, who was carried carefully before Severin, firmly placed on a rolled-up cloak, slept soundly

for whole hours. At length the queen, interrupting the deep silence, turned towards Severin, and said, 'Now that we are safe and free, and assuredly not far from our escort, had you not better turn back, generous young stranger? If they discover that you aided our flight, your life may not be safe.'

"My life is not worth preserving, madame—I have lost all which could give it any value."

"So young and so unfortunate! How is this?"

Severin gave a brief sketch of his adventures and his hapless passion for Lydorie. His recital deeply interested the queen. The modest and ingenuous affection of Lydorie, on which Severin dwelt so tenderly, was a bitter reproach to her whom passion had so far carried away as to make her expose to the scandal of two powerful kingdoms her attachment to her husband's brother.

Her heart was grievously oppressed at that moment; and she raised her eyes, which swam in tears, on him for whose sake she had sacrificed her throne. She sought for consolation in his looks, but found it not. A sarcastic smile played on his pale face, and he addressed to Severin a few phrases of raillery, on the weak prejudices which had persuaded him to abandon Lydorie for ever, rather than risk her remorse by urging her more forcibly to quit her husband's roof and fly with him.

While the queen listened to his ironical, and she thought heartless words, a horrid doubt for the first time assailed her. She asked herself if indeed this man for whom she had so suffered loved her sincerely; or whether he had not plunged her into the abyss of disgrace from the cold calculations of ambition? The question was too painful for examination then—too deep for solution perhaps ever. She turned away lest she might see in the heart-betraying expression of his features the answer which she asked for, yet dreaded to receive. Ah! this anguished moment and the like, were the expiations inflicted by Heaven for the criminal enjoyments which to the eye of the world were allowed to go unpunished.

And now the travellers came up with the faithful domestic and the expected escort, who waited for them at the place appointed. The queen gave to Severin a valuable ring, which she told him to keep in remembrance of one to whom he had

done such good service, and of the boy he had so kindly taken charge of. The Earl of Kent took him aside :

"Young man," said he, "in assisting us as you have done, you have perhaps done yourself a service as well as us. This is not the moment to entrust you with the perilous secret of our names. The less you know of us now, the better. But let our blessed Lady and St. George but have us in their keeping, and you shall one day remember with joy the actions of the night we have passed together !"

At these words he rejoined the escort ; and Severin, throwing a wistful look towards the Hainault road — yet irresistibly drawn back to the scene that was to complete, as it had begun, his destiny, slowly retraced his way to Paris on the noble steed which he whom he had served insisted on his keeping as a token of his gratitude.

CHAPTER VI.

At the epoch of these events, under the reigns of King Edward II. of England and Charles IV. of France, — the latter surnamed *Le Bel*, from his being, as an old quaint chronicler expresses it, "*gent de prestance*," and having "*grand appétit d'amour*," — the art of painting was confined to a cold, clumsy, and mincing imitation of nature. The few pictures of that period are particularly deficient in that spirit of animation which is now the very soul of the art. The painter of those days, wishing to give a representation of life, stamped his efforts with the imprint of death. The portraits seem likenesses of painted corpses ; and figures meant to represent action, resemble so many skeletons, fixed in a given attitude and covered in the prevalent costume.

The chief use of the art during the fourteenth century, was in its application to the embellishment of manuscripts. In the miniature ornaments with which they were adorned, the patient talent of the rubricator produced admirable results, and reached a most extraordinary height of perfection. In examining the rare and precious specimens of such works,

which now remain preserved in almost all their original freshness, we gaze with astonishment at the rich colours which sparkle and glow over the page, surrounding the capital letters with a halo of gold and azure, dividing the columns of close and regular manuscript, and terminating in some exquisitely finished ornament below them. The mixture of bright with less dazzling tints forms a combination of which modern painting gives no idea ; and the sight would be soon tired and dazzled by so much splendour, did it not in turn repose on the broad margin of white or cream-coloured vellum.

But the beauty of the art was all confined to the skill with which its brilliant colours were thus arranged. The subjects represented, particularly when human beings were included, were the miniature details of a preposterous bad taste. Whether it was some saint with a gilded halo round his head, or a knight of chivalry armed for the lists, or the author of the book kneeling at the foot of some pope or bishop, whose stiffened hands are standing up in the gesture of benediction, or a feudal chieftain with long flat streams of hair parted on his forehead, or a jester in cap and bells with a jay on his wrist — parodying his master's falcon — all wear the same intolerable air of inanity, and present a total absence of all that is inspiring in human life, or interesting in nature. Men-at-arms, castles, rivers, trees, mountains, all jumble together in a close confusion — for perspective had not yet lent its magic to the art.

An illuminated manuscript was in those strange days, when intellect was so advanced but civilisation so imperfect, a valuable treasure. Nearly seventy years after the time we treat of, Charles VI. of France possessed but six volumes in his library. And many a chieftain of high lineage and high fame for feats of arms, having by great favour been allowed to examine these rare wonders, returned to his feudal castle and told his gentle dame of the marvellous embellishments in the majestic tomes, paid for so highly to some obscure monk or nameless clerk, but which he, high and mighty warrior that he was, would have blushed to be thought capable of reading.

From all this it may be supposed that the profession of rubricator was very lucrative ; for rare as was the accomplishment of reading, that of illuminating manuscript was in-

finitely more so. It was often, then, while in the practice of his art, and in the enjoyment of the luxuries and goods of life which it produced him, that Severin blessed the memory of the good Canon Watermetz, whose name was, alas ! associated so closely with that one which formed at once the blessing and the bane of his existence.

Returned now from his abrupt and adventurous expedition, and his thoughts perplexed between wonderment as to who his new acquaintances could be, and what their sudden cause of flight, and with the far more absorbing subject of Lydorie's resolute abandonment of him, and the best means for making her renounce her cruel decision, he sat down before the large table, where pencils, colours, gold leaf, and plaquets of foil, with the other utensils of his art, were spread.

But in vain did Severin hope to gain quiet and calm in the labours of his profession. His turbulent thoughts rose up and ran riot, despite his repeated efforts at application ; and he felt relief rather than annoyance at hearing the vociferations of a noisy crowd, which had entered the street and seemed gathered for some specific object in front of the house in which he lodged. As he approached one of the narrow casements in order to look out, his chamber door was violently burst open, several armed men rushed on him, bound him with cords, dragged him forcibly away, and followed by a furious mob, who heaped on him insult, abuse, and execration, he was finally placed within a prison, and thrust into one of its most loathsome dungeons.

Bewildered, confounded, yet almost looking with apathy on his fate, he was roused up by the reopening sounds of his prison gate, just as his dungeon door was on the point of being closed. The ruffian gaoler wished to give one additional pang to the suffering prepared for him — but with it he gave a new impulse to his existence. Turning his eyes in the direction of the grating bolts and bars, and startled by a renewed yell of savage imprecation from the mob without, he saw a female figure carried forward, her delicate arms bound, like his own strong limbs, with cords, her fainting frame resting in the clasp of a fierce man-at-arms. "Heavens ! Ye saints of glory ! can it be ?" Yes, it was Lydorie !

He would have sprung forward — but the gaolers pushed him into the gloomy dungeon ; the door closed with a heavy sound, and he fell insensible on the floor.

For three whole months the wretched Severin lingered in his dungeon. No human face ever met his anxious glance, save that of his gaoler, a wretch chosen, it would seem, not less from his brutal disposition than his repulsive aspect. Insensible to every appeal, he never answered one word to Severin's desperate inquiries as to the charges against himself, or, what affected him a thousand-fold more acutely, the fate of Lydorie. At times, indeed, as if inclined to give some relief to his half-maddened mind, the gaoler would prolong his visit some minutes beyond the usual time ; and while laying down the scanty supply of food, enough to keep body and soul together from day to day, he would seem to listen more earnestly to the prisoner's pleadings ; but then, with diabolical refinement, he would give a fiend-like smile, or burst into coarse laughter, as he retired and fastened the bolts and bars.

Innumerable conjectures floated on Severin's brain. But the most settled of the several notions that seemed to bring conviction was, that the two strangers whose flight he had so effectively helped, had, for some selfish motive of security, sacrificed him to their own enemies. And he concluded, that for some inexplicable cause they found it politic to implicate the innocent Lydorie, as a pretended accomplice in the measures which he alone had effected. How bitterly did he now regret the confidence he had placed in those strangers ! But what a relief was it at the time to unburthen his overloaded heart ! And who could have suspected persons of their evident high rank, apparent candour and cordiality, and whose only probable feelings towards him should have been those arising from generosity and gratitude ?

But it was too late for regret — too soon, perhaps, for despair. The flickering light of Hope was still alive. And the very circumstance which so aggravated his suffering on personal accounts, brought an antidote with it. The fact that Lydorie was implicated in his fate, convinced him that while his was undecided, hers remained in doubt. And there was a deep but dreary element of consolation in thinking that she still inhabited the same mournful mansion with him, and the atmosphere of misery around him seemed purified and brightened, by the belief that she was in it too. With this feeling — one of those heaven-sent consolations which accompany almost every variety of suffering — Severin, tired out

with the torturing agitation of thought, used to fling himself on the damp straw of his dungeon, and dream bright visions, which had probably not floated o'er him had he pressed the downy couch of a palace.

One morning his door was opened ; his gaoler entered as usual, but he was followed by four men, one of them in the costume of a legal functionary. After scrupulously ascertaining that the prisoner's chains were securely fastened on his emaciated limbs, they ordered him to follow them, and they all quitted the dungeon.

It was spring. The air was soft and clear. The sky brightly blue. In quitting the infected spot where he had crouched so long in anguish, a thrill of joy rushed through the prisoner's frame, as though the inspiring breath of heaven had found a free passage through every pore. He for a moment forgot all past misery, all present danger, and had the thread of life that moment snapped asunder, he had died a death of perfect happiness. So far for the physical susceptibility of the man — but one lightning flash of thought, bringing back the image of his adored Lydorie, as he last saw her, turned all this riot of sensation into the still calm of despair. His chains once more weighed him down. His heart sunk again, and he walked on, or tottered rather, his feeble limbs scarcely able to support their load of woe.

After traversing several streets he was conducted to a large building, called by courtesy the seat of *justice*. He was soon in the presence of those tools of tyranny whose voice was to decide his fate. The crowd who attended to witness the trial received the accused with their usual yell of anticipating condemnation ; and, as he took his place on the seat allotted to the unhappy culprits, who were doomed to the mockery of judicial inquiry in those days, a new shout from the ferocious mob caused him to raise his eyes and look around. He beheld Lydorie, loaded with chains, but a beam of joy and beauty flashing across her pallid cheek as she caught his view. He strove to dart towards her ; but the guards held him down on his seat ; and she quietly occupied hers, with looks of love and confidence alternately fixed on him, or thrown up towards heaven.

Some introductory forms being gone through, the principal judge addressed the two prisoners as follows : —

“Severin Magalouffe and Lydorie de Lens, Countess of Coucy in your own right, listen ! You, Magalouffe, are the murderer of Sir Eustace de Lens, a brave and worthy knight, late in the service of his Majesty King Charles, and deputy intendant of the palace, a high and honourable place in the royal household. You treacherously waylaid him in the night, in the near neighbourhood of his own residence, aided by yonder criminal, his wife, who met you by appointment there, to do this bloody deed. The provost and his marshals and men-at-arms, in carrying off the corpse of the murdered knight, found on the spot this green velvet toque. Well may you start with horror at this silent evidence of your crime ! Within the folds of its lining was concealed this slip of parchment, traced with these damning words, ‘ This night, Severin, when the curfew sounds its warning — fail not — ’tis the last ’ — the last hour my husband has to live, was no doubt what her guilty hand would have written, were ye not already on that point agreed ! The words are traced by you, Lydorie de Lens, for fatally true it is that you were early and foolishly taught the art of writing, which was never meant for women’s knowledge, but suits best the holy monks, whose duty is to preserve and propagate the blessed scriptures and the works of the saints ; or the learned clerks and doctors, whose business is to expound and transcribe the laws of the state. This false step in your early bringing up has led you now to conviction. Let it be a warning to those who hear me, to bring up their daughters in that wise ignorance which is suitable to every woman educated in the fear of God, and the simple duties of her estate in life. Severin Magalouffe, what have you to answer ? ”

Severin, overwhelmed by the weight of this unlooked-for accusation, to which appearances lent such a colour of truth, could not, unprepared as he was with arguments or witnesses, attempt a useless defence. For himself he saw there was no hope. His only thought was of Lydorie ; and he exclaimed in a steady voice, —

“ She is innocent ! ”

“ He confesses his own guilt — put it down in the scroll ! ” said the chief judge. “ And you, Lydorie, Countess of Coucy ? ” added he.

“ Heaven be my witness, I am innocent of this foul crime,

and Severin also!" said Lydorie in timid but unfaltering accents.

A shout of indignation broke from the auditory, and the judges shook their heads, and frowned at this perverse denial of guilt. Lydorie saw that it was in vain to oppose her feeble words to their pre-determined obstinacy. She sat down therefore in silence.

Severin, at sight of her hopeless resignation, and in the pictured horror of her approaching fate, recovered all his energy. He again stood up, and in a clear and determined manner related all the circumstances and events which bore upon the case. But the judges listened in incredulous indifference; and from all parts of the assembled crowd exclamations of disbelief and vengeance were heard.

"They are guilty! They are guilty! Revenge, for the barbarous murder of Sir Eustace de Lens!" and such-like sounds reverberated through the lofty hall. The judge then stood up to pronounce the sentence.* It condemned Severin and Lydorie, found guilty of murder and adultery, to a cruel and ignominious death, on the morning following the trial. It was heard in silence by the two prisoners; and was hailed with loud shouts of approbation by the blood-thirsty mob. After it was pronounced, the business of the day was declared to be over. The condemned criminals were dragged away to their respective dungeons, and the judges retired to the enjoyment of their evening meal.

* To the curious in matters of judicial and legislative atrocity we give the following literal extract from this document, which condemned Severin Magalouffe and Lydorie, Countess of Coucy, "être justiciés de trois manières, savoir; à être traînés sur un bahut, à trompes et trompettes, par toute la ville, de rue en rue, et puis amenés devant la maison de la dite Comtesse de Coucy: en cet endroit ils seront liés sur une eselle (*échelle*) haut si que chacun petit et grand les pourra voir; et aura-t-on fait en ladite place un grand feu. Quand ils seront liés on leur coupera la main dextre et senestre, arachera la langue, et crèveras les yeux. Après quoi, on les jettera au feu, pour ardoir, (*brûler*), et après leur sera le cœur tiré hors du ventre et jeté au feu: après que les dits Severin Magalouffe et Lydorie, Comtesse de Coucy auront ainsi été atournés, on leur coupera la tête, et seront-ils découpés en quatre quartiers, et envoyés en quatre meilleures rues de la cité de Paris."

CHAPTER VII.

THE Hotel St. Paul, the palace of King Charles, was a large and straggling building, or rather a collection of buildings, purchased from different owners, and united together by connecting balustrades and corridors, and it stretched along the borders of the river Seine, not far from the scene of the events so important to the now desolate Severin and Lydorie.

In the most distant portions of this palace was a large court planted with trees, in the midst of which a fountain threw up an artificial stream of water, which fell down again among the foliage, on the surface of a broad basin, with a monotonous and melancholy sound. All the windows which looked upon this court, were defended by wireworked trellis, to prevent the intrusion of a quantity of pheasants, pigeons, and other birds domesticated in the place.

It was in a small tower or pavilion at the extremity of this court, so adapted to the quiet purposes of a dormitory, that King Charles slept soundly and late, for the bright rays of sunshine had long lighted up the rich curtains of gold brocade which enveloped the regal couch. Suddenly the noise of a heavy and hasty step echoed on the marble pavement of the corridor; and, though almost stifled in the thick matting of rushes which covered the floor of the ante-room, the movements of the intruder were still audible, as he passed the pages with an air of authority, and made his way up close to the sleeping monarch.

"How now? Who is there? Who breaks in on my rest thus early?" cried the imperative king, with the ill temper so natural to all men on being so disturbed. "By my Patron, this is too bad! Do my chamberlains and pages stand at my door for nought, halberd in hand or sword at side, while I am at the mercy of every intruder? Ha! good cousin is it you?" continued he, on recognising the grave and deliberate physiognomy of Count Philip of Valois looking grimly through the curtains.

"I bring news to your Majesty, enough to make you rouse from your slumbers, aye, and to keep your eyes from closing for a night or more," replied the Count of Valois, with a harsh and somewhat presuming tone.

"What then are these evil tidings? Cut short my suspense and your own pleasure in brooding over them," said the angry king.

"Tis briefly, your Majesty, that a messenger has just arrived from Hainault, bringing, in troth, bad news. Count John, with his men-at-arms, on landing in England with Queen Isabelle, and Kent her paramour, was warmly welcomed by the turbulent barons. The chief men among them quickly raised their banners for the queen. King Edward and Spencer, besieged in Bistol, were soon taken prisoners. The captive monarch is held close and fast by Lord Berkely, while the hapless minister was executed on the spot."

"By St. Mark, good cousin, this tale comes quick and glibly from your lips, as though it pleased you well! What more? How fares it with my sister? Who is in power?"

"Queen Isabelle is proclaimed regent of the kingdom, in place of the king, who is declared unworthy to reign. Earl Aymond is now all in all—the queen is regent; but your Majesty need not learn who rules over her. Remember, sire, he bears in his flank the mark of the blade which Sir Eustace de Lens meant for his heart, and he not surprised that he means to make a pilgrimage to our Lady of Paris, who preserved his life—thirty thousand English pikes and as many men-at-arms to carry the torches in his procession."

"A truce, Philip, to your sarcastic air and words—this is indeed bad news! How quickly all this has passed!"

"Aye, by my faith, more quickly than we may complete our preparations for the threatened visit of outrageous Kent."

"What is to be done?" asked the king, in great agitation. "What force to oppose to this enemy who never pardoned a wrong? How raise supplies?"

"Force! there is none,"—resumed De Valois; "and as for supplies for the empty coffers of the state, you might torture, flay, and hang Lombards and Jews to the last man, and not get a rose noble—witness the obstinacy of Gerard de Guette and many more."

"I will throw myself at once on the great nobles," said the king.

"They are more likely in this juncture to throw themselves on your majesty. The great vassals and feudatories of the crown are your worst enemies. They are gamed over already

by English gold ; and even those that might be faithful are exhausted by their petty wars."

"Isabelle loves me still — I will depend on her."

"Remember, sire, your discourteous reception of her here so lately, when you aimed, through your creature's hand, at her lover's life."

"By the blessed saints! Count Philip, I cannot bear your taunts — you drive me mad!" exclaimed the king, springing from his bed, and pacing his chamber in a very undignified mood. "Have you thought to advise? No consolation? No resource? I still reckon on Isabelle —"

"Your majesty is about to lose, this very day, all chance of her intercession to avert this threatened calamity."

"How is that? What mean you, Philip?"

"The provosts and judges have condemned and are going to execute a man who, without knowing whom he rescued, was the means of saving the life of the Earl of Kent, the night that de Lens fell in the attempt to assassinate him. A worthy priest has just now told me all the details having come from the prison of the innocent man to implore my good offices with your Majesty for his pardon."

"How are we to know that Isabelle cares for this culprit's life?"

"Here is a ring, which I readily recognise for hers, given by her to the youth in token of gratitude — I received it ere-while from the hands of the priest." And then, at the king's request, Count Philip entered into an ample explanation of the adventure by which Severin and Lydon had been so seriously implicated in her husband's well-merited death.

"Isabelle loves the marvellous and romantic," said the king to himself in deep reverie, when the Count of Valois had concluded. "Enough, Philip!" continued he, addressing the count. "This tale tells marvellous well. Give instant orders that at noon precisely this officious youth, who stepped between me and my just intentions towards Kent, be brought to the Church of Notre Dame, to do full penance for his crimes — be even this charge unfounded — and afterwards carried to execution!"

The count gazed on Charles with stern astonishment ; and attempted to address some remonstrance on this act of manifest tyranny.

"Do as we have ordered, cousin!" interrupted the king, with more than usual peremptoriness of tone; and to cut short all rejoinder on the part of the count, he called his chamberlains and valets, and directed them to dress him in all speed.

When the confessor of the prison returned from his visit of intercession to the Count of Valois, deeply afflicted with its result, and considering in what terms he could best prepare the unfortunate Severin for his fate, he found him in a crisis of fierce excitement.

The previous day he had been calm and as it were overwhelmed by the weight of an inevitable evil. But when, after having made his confession to the good priest, the latter informed him who were the distinguished personages whose flight he had assisted, and that he saw a clear means, if time were but afforded, of proving his innocence and that of Lydorie, an uneasy and anxious feeling of delight seemed to possess him. The poignant impatience which succeeded during the night and on the following morning caused an agitation approaching to delirium.

At length the door of his dungeon was once more opened. The old priest appeared. His sorrowful looks and eyes filled with tears told the condemned youth that no hope was left him.

Then it was that the ungovernable rage of despair completely o'ermastered Severin. He sprang from end to end of his dungeon, he lugged and clanked his chains, he struck his head against the walls, and vociferated screams and imprecations. Neither the gentle voice of the priest nor the robust exertions of the gaoler had power to calm his fury, till he sunk bleeding and exhausted at their feet.

"Oh, my son, my son!" exclaimed the holy man, "If human power condemns and punishes us wrongfully, is not the justice of heaven waiting to recompense us for our sufferings here below? Accept, with resignation, the crown of thorns of mortal woe, to receive one of unfading glory hereafter! Think of your manifold sins, my son, and repent in time!"

"And *she, she!* What are her sins? She, who is pure as the angels of heaven! And they are going to destroy that beautiful form, in open day and in the gaze of the monstrous

brutality of mankind ! Let me loose—set me free ! There is no justice on earth or in heaven !”

At this blasphemy the saintly old man signed himself devoutly with the sign of the cross, and vowed a nine days’ office to our Lady of Grace, if by her powerful influence she deigned to save the poor sufferer from such an excess of despair.

“ Oh, my dear child,” resumed he with great emotion, “ do not die in blasphemy, and as abandoned miscreants might die ! Reject not the holy palm of martyrdom in virtue’s cause, which the blessed angels prepare for you. Innocence is virtue, and you are innocent ! Oh, die not thus ! For such a death would be to inflict on me, who have laboured night and day to console, as I could not save you, an everlasting recollection of anguish.”

“ Oh pardon, pardon, holy father ! But it is so frightful to think of !—Oh ! if I could die alone ! But she ! she !”

At length the good priest contrived to bring the suffering youth to a state of comparative calm ; and when the executioners came to lead him away, they found him kneeling before the holy man, who stooped over him, blessed him, and wept aloud.

According to the custom of those barbarous times, when every outrage was added to embitter the pangs of tyranny’s victim, the prisoner was bound on a hurdle and thus drawn amidst the insults of the populace to the church of Nôtre Dame, where, according to the orders of the King, he was to undergo the species of penance known by the name of *amende honorable*. An immense crowd filled the church in all parts ; and contrary to custom in like cases, Severin was led into the choir, across which a long black curtain was suspended, as if to add gloom to the melancholy scene.

While Severin was placed upon his knees in front of the curtain, it was slowly drawn on one side, and Lydorie, dressed in the splendid apparel of a bride, suddenly rushed forward, and with a hysteric scream of joy threw herself into her lover’s arms. Severin, quite overcome, lost for a while all sense of woe or joy.

When he came to himself, Lydorie was still there, supporting his wounded head, embracing his forehead and bathing it with tears of rapture mixed with dread. Many persons richly clad, among whom were ladies who wept and smiled at

once, surrounded Severin. His arms were released from their cords, and they had instinctively folded themselves round Lydorie's waist.

The King—for Charles himself was present—gazed on the scene with the interest which the author of a mystery might have taken in the representation of his work, while it was acted by the holy brothers of his convent.

"Now, my Lord Bishop," said he to a prelate who stood by in full pontificals—"now celebrate the marriage; the time is come!—And here is the dowry which we give with our royal hand to this noble dame, full restitution of her rights, full reparation for her honour, full enjoyment of lands, estates, and privileges falsely forfeited to the crown. And here is a patent of nobility for this brave and injured youth in name of our dearly cherished sister, the Queen Regent of England. For be it known to all men, that it was he who saved this beloved sister from danger and perhaps death, when we were most treacherously instigated to wrath against her. But this, alas! is the fate of princes—too often do wicked counsellors make them walk in evil ways!

"My Lord Robert of Artois," continued the wily King, after a long-drawn sigh, and turning to a young prince who stood at his side—"it was not you assuredly who wert cause of this our almost fatal error. Your voice was always raised in favour of our dear sister, and we thank you for it now. To you then be entrusted the joyful task of communicating the description of this scene to Isabelle of England. Tell her how truly and how well her brave preserver has found protection and gratitude at my hands!"

"And now, my Lord Bishop, proceed. And with this ring, the gift of my ever-beloved sister to this gallant youth, and which has served to discover the mystery so nearly fatal, be the nuptial rites performed."

The marriage was duly celebrated. The monarch and his court retired. Severin and Lydorie were escorted in triumph to a richly decorated suite of apartments prepared in the royal palace. And the populace, who had so lately hurled their insults and imprecations so unsparingly on an innocent victim, were now with much difficulty restrained from tearing in pieces the judge who had condemned him, and who had been attracted by curiosity to his window to see the triumphant procession as it passed.

THE
CURSE OF THE BLACK LADY.

A LEGEND OF BRABANT.

“KNOWEST thou, Jam Steen, if yonder skiff in the offing be the craft of Peter Meerman; she that has been four days missing—as might well be looked for from her sailing out on Friday?”

“Hadst thou only used thy sound eye and not strove to blink through the other, thou hadst seen that her sharp keel and upper rigging are not Flemish,” answered gruffly the man thus questioned. “Aye, as I thought,” continued he, after having attentively peered at the vessel through his half-closed hand, “she is certainly English, and ——”

“I think so too,” said the first speaker, interrupting the sentence, “and it is *that* that made me so dubious, for it seems marvellous strange that one of King Edward’s ships should venture on our shores since the Black Lady’s seizure of the wools, and his reprisals.”

It was in a solitary spot on the coast of Flanders that the preceding dialogue took place between two fishermen, who, while they were employed in drying their nets on the strand, watched what would to a landsman’s eye have seemed but the shadow of a ship on the distant horizon. The view around was bleak and wild. The only evidences of vegetation were a few stunted briars, with here and there a thistle struggling through the sterile soil, which occasionally rose into irregular ridges that served as a boundary to the encroachments of the sea. But for these natural dykes it would long before have totally inundated a district so flat that those ungraceful in-

equalities served as a relief to the dreary and wide-spread desolation. The signs of human occupation were confined to a few oven-like huts scattered on the sands, the abodes of some of that amphibious class to which belonged the two individuals whose conversation we have just reported.

"Hey ! what now ? — 'Tis a signal for a boat," continued the first of those speakers, resuming the subject and answering his own question, while he dropped the net he had been handling and hurried to the beach. The signal was not unobserved by others, nor disregarded by any. In a little while three boats were seen plying towards the vessel, two of them guided by our colloquists, and presently a fourth appeared from a more distant point.

When Jam Steen, in his little and clumsily built boat regained the beach, it was freighted with a lady extended on a kind of couch, her head carefully supported by a man dressed in a cloth of Bruges mantle, trimmed with minivar, and a velvet toque garnished with a heron's feather. Another, in the costume of a Knight Templar, aided this person to render the short course of the boat as little fatiguing as might be to the sick lady, who by the richness of her attire seemed to be of high rank. The three other boats were filled with attendants and baggage ; but the notice of the stragglers who, one by one, collected on the beach, was particularly attracted by two Africans, whose woolly heads and unprepossessing visages furnished a theme of revolting wonderment to the untravelled Flemings.

As the Templar and his companion came on shore, the crowd gradually fixed their attention on the latter, who, having thrown off his cloak, appeared habited in the fashion of the Low Countries ; but his tunic and hose were of the finest materials, while a massive gold chain and rich medallion stamped authority on his air of proud command. His short hair, thick moustache, and marked and prominent features soon, in fact, caused him to be recognised as Guy de Dampier, Count of Flanders. His attendants quickly placed his lady-wife in a litter, hastily prepared ; but scarcely was it put in motion, in the direction of Bruges, accompanied by the Count and his companions and followed by gazing groups, than it was met by a new comer, who approached Count Guy with an exclamation of surprise, while he folded him in an embrace of

dubious cordiality, and gave a salute rather familiar than friendly to the Countess.

"What, Baldwin! You here to greet my unlooked-for coming?" exclaimed the Count, breaking from the loosely clasped arms of his half-brother. "How is it with you, and how with the Lady Marguerite, our mother?"

"For myself, Guy, I am as usual, neither well nor ill, neither rejoicing nor sorrowing, enjoying nought yet venting no complaint, filling a high station as though it were not mine, and zealously performing duties which it seems a mistake of fate to have imposed upon me. As for our—*your* mother, let me rather say, she has ever since your departure held on her harsh and rigid course. Shut up in the close recesses of her palace, scarcely seen, never heard, the darkest gloom oppresses her. Subjects, duties, glory, seem all alike forgotten or despised."

"And this affair about the seizure of English wool, of which I heard obscurely in yon vessel?" inquired the Count anxiously.

"Alas!" said Baldwin, "our mother, imperious as inexorable, has hurried on that ruinous measure, and scorns to flinch from the evils it provokes. The embassy to England for payment of the old-claimed subsidy was indignantly refused. King Henry, though old and feeble, spiritedly rejected the demand. The Lady Marguerite, rousing for a moment from her lethargy, seized on every cargo, every bale, every bundle of English wool within the state, though much of it had passed into the hands of her own subjects.

"And was there none near her, Baldwin, not *one* to urge the madness of the measure? To show the ruin of exasperating our most powerful neighbour, whose alliance is a vital necessity of our existence? Without English wool, our manufactories may crumble, and our weavers starve!"

"You, Count of Flanders, by your firmness and your martial character, have, I must own, obtained much influence over the mind of the Lady Marguerite; born as you were of her second and less unfortunate marriage than that which gave me birth," replied Baldwin of Avesnes. "And yet I am not at all assured that had even you been here to interfere with the first movement of her resentment against the King of England, that the claws of your Lion had not been clipped as close as the tongue and nails of my brother's Griffin, when he

dared to oppose her will. Bethink you then what would have been my fate, whose very name recalls the injuries she suffered from my unhappy parent, had I once dared to interfere !”

“Enough, enough, good Baldwin. I know too well, that towards thee and thy haughty brother no mother’s love glows in her bosom. Yet, methought, as she is not ignorant of thy ability in the transaction of our court affairs, she might perchance have listened to thy counsel. But tell me then, what followed upon the seizure of the wools ?” inquired Sir Guy de Dampier.

“Before any other steps were taken on the part of the English, King Henry died,” replied Baldwin. “But Edward, his successor, still absent on the crusade, sent orders that all our vessels in the English ports, together with the Flemish merchandise of every description which was found within his territory, should be seized and sold, and that the money arising from their sale should be divided among those whose goods had been confiscated here ; and yet more, he forbade any farther exportation.”

“But we can still get their wools from Brabant, from Holland, and from Germany ?”

“Nay, nay, think not that England’s king, aided as he is by his faithful counsellors the Commons and rich burgesses, is to be thus overreached.”

“Why not ?” impatiently asked Count Guy.

“Because,” replied Baldwin, “when they found we made large purchases from Antwerp, Flushing, and Hamburg, the King of England issued an edict to forbid the exportation of wool altogether ; and he has besides now invited our artisans to go over with their looms to England, where a large premium and powerful protection await to welcome them.”

“And do the greasy varlets, forgetting our protection, seek another master ?” asked the Count, angrily.

“When want and misery stare him in the face, when the hungry manufacturer furls by the privation of his food no strength of body to support the mind’s resolve ; when he sees his infants starving around him ——”

“Enough, enough !” cried the Count, stamping furiously, but his brother firmly continued :

“Add to this information your knowledge of the Flemish character. Free even to madness with their governors, and

proud of their loyalty, as soon as they deem themselves oppressed, their clamours are proportionably loud, and epithets of the most injurious nature are lavished on those to whom they impute their wrongs. Our mother, though she has given them many useful laws, and has bestowed so many regulations advantageous to their commerce, lives, like some eastern despot, enclosed within her palace; seldom viewed, even by the Hainaulters among whom she resides, and never visible to the Flemings, whose counts of former times have lived among them, followed their usages, and conformed to their characters, and have at least listened to their complaints, if they could not redress their grievances. The people have therefore taken the Lady Marguerite in abhorrence."

"Abhorrence!"

"Yes, Guy: though she be my mother, and as such commands my duty, however little she be sensible to the claims of nature, 'tis necessary that you know the truth. They speak of her as one entirely destitute of natural sensibility: they palliate my father's severity—nay, frown not, Count of Flanders,—they hint at some dark practices, and they designate her so frequently by the epithet of the 'Black Lady,' that many, I am persuaded, both in Hamault and Flanders, are ignorant that this is not really her title."

Count Guy looked the astonishment he really felt. For some moments he remained silent, pondering over all that had been said, and then changing the conversation, asked, "And have many left our coast for England?"

"The edict is of too recent a date to have been very widely extensive in its effects. Two or three families of Bruges have been imprisoned, detected in their efforts to expatriate themselves. But what avails it? Hunger is stronger than prison walls! There are continually watches for the arrival of strange vessels, and it was the intelligence that one of English seeming was in sight that brought me to the coast."

"And the Countess?" said Count Guy.

"I have already said, and you need not be told, that unsupported by you, Count of Flanders, I dare not seek to tell her vexatious news," replied Baldwin.

"Tut, tut, man. Do I not know that your politics reach to the innermost recesses of her palace?" observed the Count, laughing.

"If it be so, I reserve the secret for confession ; and I think that you have not yet taken the tonsure," replied Baldwin, in the same tone.

"And my rich town of Bruges?" said Guy, with some hesitation.

"Nay, Guy, spare me, I pray you, the mortification of telling you of what your own eyes will too soon read. But more than all, I fear Edward's anger."

"Fear!" exclaimed the Count, haughtily, "*I* fear him not, but I dread the effects of his measures upon the trade and consequent prosperity of my country."

"Pardon me, Guy, if I have used a word unfit for the ears of one educated in the court of the noble Henry of Brabant, and who has fought with so much glory in the Holy Land. But now let me ask, how is it that you are here landed on this wild spot, brought by an English ship ; without troops, almost without attendants, and of all the noble companions of your departure, how comes it that not one returns ; that your only gossips are a woman and a Templar, and that you have doffed your knightly harness?"

"I'll tell thee, Baldwin. After St. Louis's death——" began Count Guy.

"St. Louis!" interrupted his auditor. "Then the different reports of the disastrous issue of the expedition are but too true?"

"Yes, he's dead," replied Count Guy. "And he died not in the front of battle beneath the enemies' attack, when his surrounding warriors might have raised a noble monument to his fame in the dead bodies of his foes piled up around him, but he drooped, wasted and worn by the burning sun and horrid climate ; and he died surrounded by puling monks and weeping women, and warriors worse than either, who cried to bear them company!"

"Then France, as well as England, has a new king. Think you not that Philip will give up Labrosse?" asked Baldwin.

"Believe it not, for though I hunted the dying Louis almost to his grave—though I appealed to his justice—though I besought him not to permit his son to begin his reign by protracting an act of injustice towards the first high vassal of the crown—though I took upon me your character, and represented how degrading to France it was, to stake at

once its peace and honour upon the detention of a miserable *barber*, all my arguments were unavailing. But I will have my revenge ! I swore unalterable hatred towards his son ; and may this right hand fail me if I forget the oath !”

So much was the Count agitated while making this narration, that every muscle in his stout frame seemed in motion, and his hands clenched and unclenched with rapid agitation.

An indescribable emotion played upon the features of Baldwin. Though his countenance was faintly lit up with a smile, his mouth was closely compressed. He remained silent, while Count Guy seemed glad to drop the conversation, and turned his eyes on the crowd by whom he was surrounded. The survey was any thing but pleasing. No frank and loyal cry, as of old, hailed the presence of the prince. But a discontented murmur ran along the stragglers who still kept on his path, as he and his cortège moved away. As they approached Bruges, with its wooden, partly-coloured houses, the numbers increased, but yet no friendly greeting met his ear, greedy of the expected sounds. The streets were thronged with loungers, not as in former times, when the busy multitude, either in careless haste or with engrossed countenances, pursued their path of pleasure or of gain ; but each now paused, with wandering gaze, to spy his neighbour's bearing, or peer on the stranger with the vacant look of hopeless, thriftless idleness. The creaking and humming sound of the loom no longer gave evidence that the houses were filled with busy hands, each one bringing riches and support to the state : but the oiled paper, which at that time supplied the place of window glass in most of the burgesses' houses, hanging in torn strips and fluttering in rags to the wind which rushed through the tenantless manufactories, seemed to the troubled view of Count Guy as if hung out to mock his entry, in place of the silken pennons of other and better days.

The spacious market-place discovered men, women, and children placed in quiet endurance on the bare earth, supported by the rough walls of the surrounding houses. The Cloth-house was shut up ; and the Water-mart, an immense hall, through whose extensive walls a canal poured its obedient stream, was entirely closed, and gave no sign whatever of the store of wealth which was formerly unshipped within its

shelter. All spoke of the ruin which had followed his short absence.

“And this,” he cried, “is the winding up of the eighth crusade, so proudly undertaken, and so boldly supported. My wife’s health enfeebled, my own treasures buried in the ocean, my brave followers gone to guard it there, or left to rot in Pagan lands ! And here, where I had at least trusted to find repose after such trials, I meet at each step some memento of my people’s lost love and wasted treasure !”

He descended at the ancient palace of the counts of Bruges, instead of the more princely residence of Winendale, which was a short distance from the city, and whose twelve fortified towers, together with the magnificent drawbridge and other suitable appurtenances, rendered it the most costly and remarkable building in the Low Countries.

CHAPTER II.

THE Count and his two companions were soon seated at table, in an apartment fitted up in a style worthy of the richest country in Europe, for so Flanders was then considered. The walls of the spacious apartment in which the Count had chosen to repose and refresh himself and his friends, were hung with the gilt leather which was then one of the staple commodities of Bruges ; the chairs being also covered with the same rich material, then of recent invention. The windows, though high and narrow, and composed of stained glass, were so numerous, that the light, though softened, was not obscured. The rays of a splendid autumnal sun, playing on the grotesque gilding of the hangings, reflecting the rich tints of the coloured glass, produced a gay and pleasing effect. But the Count himself was moody, and vainly endeavoured to shake off the gloom which the untoward events of the last few months had produced. At length, filling his goblet and inviting his companions to do the same, he said, somewhat abruptly, to Baldwin—“Think you the leech who has been

sent to the Lady Gertrude has skill to treat a malady unlike those of our colder climes?"

"Our mother is so assured of his well-practised skill, that she thinks to invite him to Mons, and she only delays it, seeing that she is herself almost exempt from those trials that demand his care," replied Baldwin.

Count Guy left the room.

The Templar, after a moment of thoughtfulness, said, "Count Baldwin, is then Master Labrosse, who formerly enjoyed the confidence of the Lady Marguerite, dead?"

"It must be many years since you were in these countries, Sir Knight, if you needs be told that Labrosse left Hainault, and threw himself upon the protection of the King of France. He died at Paris, but his son was so much favoured by the late monarch, that he is supposed to be on the road to the highest preferments."

The Templar paused again before he asked, "What could induce Labrosse to quit the protection of the Countess?"

"He was employed by my mother in a very delicate affair; and distrusting her promises, or having been previously gained by others, betrayed her."

The Templar was again silent for a few minutes. He rose and walked some turns quickly up and down the immense apartment, as if irresolute. At length he stopped short, directly in front of his companion, and said, "Remember you the beautiful Ada, your father's ward?"

Baldwin started, and the Templar thought he perceived him shudder. "Too well I do remember her," replied he.

"And does she still exist?" said the Templar, leaning so forward in his anxiety for Baldwin's reply, that he almost touched him.

The politic Baldwin paused a few moments, and then replied evasively,— "If you knew her, you must also be aware, that soon after the unfortunate divorce which deprived us of our birthright, though we were acknowledged to be legitimate, she quitted the protection of the Countess my mother."

"And have you not heard of her since that time?" said the Templar, somewhat impatiently.

"They say that she went to the Holy Land," replied Baldwin; "but I am quite ignorant of her fate."

The Templar drew yet nearer, and, lowering his voice almost to a whisper, said, "Did she not perish in the dungeons of Mons?"

Baldwin, rising slowly from his chair, faced the Templar, and said, "No, Sir Knight! of that crime, at least, the Lady Marguerite is innocent." While he thus spoke, his face flushed crimson, and his voice expressed at once surprise and indignation.

The Templar extended his hand to Baldwin, and said, "Enough, young man, I am satisfied. I knew your father."

"My father!" repeated D'Avesnes, taking the extended hand, "and can you then lift the veil that conceals the mystery of *his* fate?"

"That can I," said the Templar; "for 'twas I that closed his eyes. It was I who heard his last words, and who am the bearer of his blessing."

"Then he *is* dead!" said Baldwin. "Oh! what a singular fate is mine! The second son of a Countess with three princely dominions, I am '*sans terre*,' though my younger brother be a rich and powerful prince and heir of my mother's broad lands. The legitimate born of a marriage that our church disowns, with both father and mother in existence, alas! I never knew the love of either. My mother hates me, and yet her most complicated business all goes through my hands!"

"The behests of Heaven are just, though inscrutable!" exclaimed the Templar. "Your father died a hermit and a penitent, in a distant land. Listen to one passage of his life, which may palliate his seeming cruelty in flying his wife, and abandoning you his child. Just after your birth, your father was called to France. Returning one evening from the vesper service in the cathedral of Laon, he was accosted by a Moorish minstrel, who throwing himself in his path, presented to him a ring and implored him to save the owner. He knew it at once for the Emperor Baldwin's ——"

"My mother's father!"

The Templar continued, without heeding the interruption:—"The disguised minstrel, who was no other than the queen of Bulgaria, who had freed your grandfather from his captivity, having loved him with a sister's love——"

"Fame says with a criminal passion, Sir Templar."

"I know it," said the Templar calmly. "But were you acquainted with the evidences to which your father was compelled to yield, you might judge her less harshly. She became entirely a Christian. The jealous fury of the king, her husband, left flight her only resource to escape an ignominious death, with total loss of honour. They fled together. Years elapsed; and they wandered from one concealment to another amid the most savage tribes, ere they could reach the civilised lands of Europe. After unheard-of perils, Baldwin arrived at the castle of Avesnes, emaciated and feeble, and not to be recognised but by the eye of a wife, or a child. He sent to Marguerite a chaplet of holly, which had been formerly blessed by St. Guthred. Baldwin, she is your mother — but I must tell how her pride, and that dreadful selfishness which has so perverted her better nature, revolted from acknowledging him; and while the aged greyhound which he had reared fawned upon him, his daughter spurned him from the door; and when the poor old man indignantly refused to quit the castle, he was imprisoned in the deepest dungeon."

"O God, her father!" said Baldwin.

The Templar continued — "The Moorish minstrel penetrated even to his prison. The guard who had formerly served him procured the implements for writing — he addressed a letter to your father."

"And he saved the emperor!" said Baldwin, almost breathless.

"Your father flew to the prison. The seneschal led the way to the dungeon. The emperor was lifeless. Baldwin, he had been *hanged*, like a common felon!"

"God! and this monster still exists! And I am her child! And I yet wonder that brother has lifted his arm against brother. That woe and misery are our portion!"

"Can you wonder that his wife became hateful to your father?" said the Templar. "From that moment he felt his accursed destiny, he sought to break his marriage. He threw himself on the pontiff's mercy, and obtained a divorce. But ere the tedious delays of the spiritual courts were over-come, another passion had taken firm and fatal possession of your father's heart."

"Ah!" said Baldwin, "the unhappy Ada." The Templar made no reply, while his companion continued — "And for

this fatal and criminal passion he forgot his children — left us to a mother's — to *such* a mother's hate !”

“ Young man, you condemn with the coldness of a Stoic——”

“ I feel, with the bitterness of a victim !”

“ Listen awhile. When Ada was first introduced to the castle, to your father's guardianship, she was in the earliest dawn of beauty. All the graces of youth were united in her person. Her winning gentleness was particularly pleasing to the countess, who kept her continually in her presence. Your father gazed upon her till a guilty passion filled his heart. He thought of the ties that should have secured her from his love. Alas ! he could see only the stern and haughty Marguerite, with the blood of her parent on her forehead ——”

“ But us his children, young and then innocent,” said Baldwin.

“ We are none of us innocent in the eyes of the pure Being who suffers in our sins,” said the Templar, mildly crossing himself. “ He *did* think upon his children, but the image of the young and then equally innocent Ada continually stood between him and them. He wept, but the tears he shed were those of a guilty passion. Ada discovered her guardian's sufferings, and her bosom was filled with compassion. But a crowd of feelings pressed on her heart. She feared they might — alas ! she too surely felt they *would* — recoil on herself. She participated in his crime !”

Herc the Templar paused. “ Alas !” said Baldwin, “ too well, notwithstanding my early age, do I remember what has been a source of such lasting misery. And plainly do I recall the malady which seemed to wear and waste my father's life, before the divorce pronounced by the court of Rome arrived. And *you*, doubtless, are aware that the same decree which pronounced my father's divorce, declared our legitimacy ? I wept my father's loss, but my mother yet remained. Though even then but little of that kindly love which animates a mother's feelings was hers. We were attended to, but never with that ardent tenderness which more gentle natures display. Yet Ada, after my father's departure, remained to love and to caress us. But, oh ! when Ada fled, never shall I forget the storm of passion that rent my mother's bosom. For months she would not see us, and when she

did, 'twas only, she declared, that we might learn to hate and curse our father ! When she made a second choice, William de Bourbon Dampierre, a simple knight, and when his children came to dispute our rights, my brother, Jean d'Avesnes, was taken by the count of Holland, and reared as a warrior, while I was left alone, to pine and want a mother's love. Mine had quite forgot to smile. Companion she had none, save the sad sullen discontent which preyed upon her nature. She seldom spoke except to give an order. She knew no sympathy, nought of *one* feeling that humanizes our nature. The riches of the court, the charms of nature, the glory of her husband, who was the first warrior of his age, were to her as the vapour of the morning. She sought Ada every where. She sought my father, whose fate became a mystery to all. At length, by the death of her sister Jane, these fine dominions fell under her sway, but not until Dampierre too was dead : and her pursuit of Ada, which had been never slackened, became successful. She was brought a prisoner to Mons. I was not present at their interview, but they say, the ' Black Lady ' smiled !"

" And Ada ? " said the Templar, somewhat impatiently.

" Ada was confined and watched with the closest attention," continued Baldwin. " Labrosse attended her ; I confess, I thought, for some dark purpose. How he lost my mother's confidence, and why he fled to France, is still a mystery to me."

" That mystery I can elucidate," said the Templar. " When Ada fell into the power of the countess, she was pregnant. Unsuspicious of this circumstance, and deceived by the symptoms of her state, Marguerite feared her health in danger, and that she should lose her victim. Labrosse soon discovered the truth ; and the countess gloried in the possession of two victims instead of one. He was appointed to take the child upon its birth. I saved the child. — But Ada ! tell me of her."

" Where is the boy ? " said Baldwin.

" The time is not yet come to bring him forward," replied the Templar, impatiently, — " tell of Ada's fate."

" The Lady Marguerite, you are well aware, was served from fear, and therefore badly obeyed. I found a means to send away her guards, and without being suspected myself,

I set her free, for *she* had been kind to me. It was all I dared to do; the guards dared not acknowledge their absence from their post; and this circumstance has thrown an air of mystery over the whole adventure, which has given rise to various reports. Some say that she was murdered here, and that her spirit walks——”

“And have you never heard of her since?” inquired the Templar.

“Never of her nor of my father, except that her spirit has been seen in Brabant, wandering on the confines of our Hainault.”

The Templar scarcely appeared to hear this remark, and he interrupted the speaker abruptly; “And did the countess then never suspect the part you took in Ada’s flight?”

“Alas! I have sometimes thought the hate with which I have so constantly been pursued has become more deadly since her escape,” replied d’Avesnes.

“But how, if she hates you thus, is it that she so trusts you?”

“’Tis dire necessity, Sir Templar. So close does she live enclosed within the walls of her castle; so much she hates the sight of human kind, and, more than all, the talk of glorious deeds, that men of talent, spirit, or probity have no means of finding access to her, from the simple reason that she knows them not, and will not know them. Guy de Dampierre, when he learned his trade of arms, learnt not to read or write. As to me, neglected by my mother, the bishop of Liege, her suzerain lord, proposed to rear me for the church. This, too, had been my father’s intention. But I would not risk my father’s fate and faults, for he was a secularised dean. Therefore I returned to my mother’s sad residence, and thus have I insensibly crept into employment, and have become so necessary that they cannot, if they would, replace me.

“And Count Guy,” pursued the Templar, “does he feel or act as a brother?”

“Think you, Sir Templar, that he can forget or forgive being vanquished at Kapellen, being made our prisoner, and being kindly treated? Besides he loves his mother, because he fears her, and dreads even now to lose his heritage, which he has usurped. He thinks that France, when he or Marguerite dies, will replace me or my brother in our rights.

His mother excites his resentment against France, by cherishing this fear, for they have harboured Labrosse — Oh, how a dawn of light breaks in upon me — she thinks that Ada's child —”

“Hush, hush, sir! The walls of palaces have ears!” said the Templar, in a low voice. “There is a mystery about this Labrosse, and his connection with that court, which I cannot fathom *yet*. Be silent and be secret on this our conversation. I go to Brabant; but we shall meet again.”

“To Brabant?” said Baldwin.

“Yes,” replied the Templar, “to my convent at Brussels. Should you learn any more of Ada, or Labrosse, or of the court of France, in connection with either, I may be able to serve you, in serving those who should be dear to you.”

“*Dear to me!*” said Baldwin, mournfully. “Would that I could divine the meaning of that term, which seems to make the happiness of heaven, if heaven there be!”

“Did you then never see your father? Never receive a token of his love?” inquired the Templar.

“When the two Dampierres fell into our hands, in their expedition against Zealand, a pilgrim from the Holy Land was sent by my father (so he said), and exhorted us to peace. My brother stoutly refused to yield up the advantages he had gained; and I was of his mind. I shall never forget the majesty of look and manners this pilgrim then assumed. He adjured us, for the love of Heaven, he threatened us with the pains of hell, if we yielded not to the countess. In short, my brother released the Dampierres — and peace was concluded.”

“And what said the pilgrim?”

“He blessed, and left us.”

“That pilgrim was thy father,” said the Templar.

“Most surely ’twas my father,” said Baldwin, after some moments of reflection. “Did he not speak of my mother’s wrongs, though her guardian and husband? It was indeed my father — he blessed us both. Oh, why did he not disclose himself to us! ’Twould have been so sweet to know and love him — why did he not disclose himself?”

“Since thou yet lovest him, think when those he loved come across you. Oh, think of him, and seek to deserve his blessing — adieu!”

CHAPTER III.

THE summer had passed away, and winter was drawing towards its close. It was an evening in February, when a knight, clad in complete armour, and followed by a single squire, paced slowly across the forest of Soignies, the ancient *Sonien bosch*, then spreading far and wide over the extensive territory of Hainault. They seemed to have missed their way; nor was it extraordinary; for though the season was so far advanced, a heavy fall of snow, attended by a high wind, had succeeded to the clear hard frost that ushered in the day; so that the road, never too well tracked, had now become quite imperceptible by the accumulation of snow-drifts.

Upon the shield of the knight, borne by his squire, was blazoned the Belgian Lion, at sight of which the enemies of the faith had so often trembled in Palestine.

Their horses, though noble animals, seemed jaded and wearied. The snow, which gathered in balls under their feet at every step, became so troublesome as almost to prevent their advance, which in fact became so difficult, that the travellers were glad to accept the shelter, poor as it was, afforded by a cluster of the forest trees, growing so closely together, that their trunks formed a natural rampart, under which both men and steeds seemed equally glad to repose.

"It is strange, Sir Knight," said the squire, "with the snow driving in my teeth, and the north wind howling around me, that my throat should feel parched with thirst, as when we were on the sandy deserts of Africa, and broiling beneath the rays of a noon-day's sun?"

"And," said the knight, interrupting his companion, "this goodly forest, which we believe to be a part of the domain of our mother the countess of Hainault, may, when we awake from our illusion, prove to be the mighty empire which fell from the grasp of my grandsire, the blessed Baldwin, crowned emperor of Constantinople, but which he lost so soon, that it might, without any great stretch of imagination, be believed but an ideal dominion. Would, that when the morning dawns, we might be found going to take possession! I, as well as you, have been suffering from thirst, and

would give the best sword ever forged in Brussels for a cup of such beverage as moistens the lips of the anchorite."

At this instant the storm, which had hitherto unceasingly beat against the natural rampart where they had found shelter, began to subside; and Hugo, declaring that his throat was more tormenting than ever, though his mouth was numb still with the snow he had crammed into it, in the hope of overcoming the thirst that consumed him, asked permission to pursue something like a road, which the cessation of the fall of snow-flakes enabled him to perceive, in search of some reservoir of water. The permission, after some little hesitation, was granted, and our knight was left alone.

Scarcely had the squire quitted his place by the side of his master, when the moon, hitherto obscured behind dark clouds, burst forth in all her brilliancy, and discovered to the astonished eyes of our knight of Flanders a living female figure, clothed in black, standing immediately before him.

She wore the habit of the religious order of the Beguines, and her face was towards him, and now fully visible; for the bright beams fell directly upon her features. She was very pale, the knight thought supernaturally so; or perhaps the lawn, with which the thick black veil that shaded her face was lined, might, by the reflection of its rays, heighten the effect of the pale light. She was motionless at first. But, while he gazed upon her, she lifted one hand, as if to engage his attention. The other was pointed towards heaven, doubtless to intimate, that it was the will of Him, who there rules supreme, that she was called upon to declare. She spoke; and though her voice was low, her every word seemed to penetrate the very soul of the knight, and to fix themselves on his memory, as if engraven there with a pen of iron.

"It is the Lord that commandeth the elements. It is the glorious Lord that maketh the thunder: gird thou thy sword upon thy thigh, O thou Most Mighty, according to thy renown! But why speakest thou against thy brother? Why slanderest thou thine own mother's son? Hast thou forgotten thy covenant? Hark!" she continued, motioning her finger as if to enforce attention—"Do they not seek to shorten the days of the youth, and to cover him with dishonour? Go to her, fast bound in darkness, who sitteth alone in her pride, and ask if she hath withdrawn her curse from

the childless mother ; if she hath forgotten the cry of the motherless babe ? Go, and say to her, that she diggeth a pit for another, in her blindness, which she must fall into herself. And thou," she cried, raising her voice to a tone so elevated and so shrill that the Knight involuntarily shuddered before he caught the purport of her words ; " And thou !—aim not thy sword at the breast of the unacknowledged one, lest it strike thine own best hope. Lest—" and the expression of her face as she lifted it towards Guy de Dampierre, bore in every trait the imprint of a fearful imprecation : but while she glared upon him wildly, as if she would curse with a look as well as with her voice, her eyes closed, her head drooped upon her bosom, her uplifted hand fell powerless by her side, her voice sunk to low murmuring sounds, the moon was obscured by dark clouds, and the figure passed away.

CHAPTER IV.

THE castle of the Countess of Hainault at Mons was a complete specimen of the splendid architecture of the twelfth century, or that which is now called Gothic ; pointed windows abounding in coloured glass, unpolished marble, heavy wooden doors, thickly studded with iron nails, leading into immense corridors, interminable passages, and branching staircases.

It was early on the morning following this adventure that a horn was heard beyond the castle wall, and immediately replied to by the warder ; and when the drawbridge was slowly replaced and the portcullis heavily withdrawn, a knight followed by a squire, whose surcoat bore the Flanders Lion, entered. It was Sir Guy de Dampierre and his squire.

The seneschal conducted them with much ceremony to the knight's apartments in the castle, where a small table placed by the side of an enormous log-fire in the middle of the room, and plentifully furnished with cold salted and dried meats, together with the thin wines of France, and the more potent juice of the German grape, soon made him forget the cold and thirst he had endured in the forest. The beer he

quaffed with peculiar pleasure, as it invitingly foamed in a silver tankard, which had been thickly embossed by the abbot of Wansfort, and presented by him to the Emperor Baldwin, previous to His embarkation for the Holy Land.

Having praised the flavour of the beer and helped himself to some slices from a well cured wild boar's head, he said to the chamberlain, "And Baldwin of Avesnes is not yet arrived, you say?"

"No, Count," replied the chamberlain; "we expected he would be with you."

"Why, my road lay through Namur, and he comes directly from Bruges. I marvel, therefore, he be not arrived—and I have news for him," said the knight.

The warder's horn was again heard; and after due time the person in question made his appearance. He looked harassed and fatigued, and gladly took the seat Count Guy pointed to, close by his own; and having stirred the logs which burned lazily in the huge hearth, he observed, "Methinks the wood emits this sulphureous vapour more strongly than ever. I marvel, Guy, that you have not repaid the compliment of the English king's invitation to your weavers, by bringing over workmen to build you some of those long narrow passages which, beginning just over the fire, project from the top of the house to carry off the smoke."

"What mean you, Baldwin?"

"Nay, have you not heard that in England they are beginning to build along the end of the rooms, lodges or troughs to contain the feul, on the base of which they raise a brick funnel, through which all the smoke mounts, and so evaporates at the top of the house?" replied Baldwin.

"Think you then, d'Avesnes, that the whole room can be warmed with the fire at one end of it, particularly if the smoke be carried out?"

"Indeed they say," replied d'Avesnes, "it casts a strong heat everywhere.—But how goes the war?"

"But poorly; I am almost tired of it. What we gain one month, we lose the next," replied Dampierre.

"Then why not seek some means to finish the dispute?"

"At present," replied the Count, "it seems rather necessary to consider how we should proceed in the council about to be held with my Lady Mother, touching this business of the wool seizure."

"The way is simple enough," said Baldwin. "It is but to make good the losses of the British merchants, to offer an apology to the young King of England, and to renew the treaty of commerce with him."

"But the Lady Marguerite, thinkest thou that she will so condescend?"

"That will she. Dost thou believe that the dame cannot relinquish her forced sense of pride when the finest jewel of her crown is at stake? No, no! You must make her understand the danger of the line of conduct she has adopted."

"Hold, hold, Baldwin! How think you I can do all this? I can fight for Flanders if necessary; but not even for the sovereignty of that rich country could I *talk* for it. No, Baldwin, it is you who must explain the necessity of this case."

"Count," said d'Avesnes, rising from his chair and pacing the room as he spoke, "thou knowest thy mother loves me not. Thou knowest also that he who risketh this proposition is likely to be banished her presence altogether. I have no interest in Flanders! If the burghers of Bruges, as those of Ghent have done, rise up to demand increase of privileges and force you to compliance, I have nothing in the stake to win or lose. Thus much is certain. If the trade be not restored to Bruges, the whole dependency will be in open rebellion."

Here he paused, as if waiting an answer. When Count Guy, his countenance flushed with passion, which he, however, strove to repress, said, in a tone of indignation resulting from the conviction that advantage was sought to be taken of the perilous situation of his affairs, "Well, I ween this hesitation betokens some demand? Whatever 'tis, I grant it."

"Then," said Baldwin, forgetting his cold caution for an instant, "let her highness restore to me the lordship of Avesnes, and ——" he paused awhile and then continued in a tone less firm, "and ask for me the hand of Mary of Brabant."

Count Guy looked up, as if doubting the evidence of his senses. "Mary of Brabant?" he at length exclaimed.

"Why not, my brother The lordship of Avesnes was noble enough to entitle my father to be named regent of Hainault and guardian to its heiress. The nobles here will all aid you in my claims, nor am I without friends in the

court of Brabant, as you may perhaps acknowledge when you recollect who made the duke your ally, in this last paltry war, waged for a base serf and miserable cow ——”

Here the chamberlain entered to announce that the Lady Marguerite waited them in the council chamber.

“Count,” said Baldwin, “there is no time for hesitation — do you accede to my wish?”

The chamberlain was in waiting. Count Guy replied not, but he motioned dissent with his head, and then hurried to attend his mother.

In the tapestried room into which the brothers were conducted, sat the Black Lady of Brabant on a throne elevated considerably above the floor. The dais was covered with the same rich tapestry as the hangings which covered the walls, for even in this early age Bruges was celebrated for such manufactures. The draperies of the throne were of purple velvet fringed with gold, with a canopy and curtains of the same rich materials, the latter being looped back with a massive cord and tassels. The constable supported one side of the throne, and the seneschal the other. Below these were the cup-bearer and grand huntsman. Six pages were placed about the steps of the throne, and the same number of ladies in waiting were also there. Yet Marguerite herself wanted not the surrounding magnificence to mark her superior dignity of “Countess by the grace of God,” then accorded to only one county besides her own; for there was a sort of fearful majesty about her towering height, unbowed either by the weight of years (and she had already passed what the Psalmist has declared to be the age of man) or luxurious indulgence. Her face was pale and marked by deep furrows, indicating an unlimited indulgence of the strong passions which had rendered her life so unquiet. Her eye was black, and retained all the fire of lively feeling, yet it was sunken. Her forehead was low, yet there was an inflexibility of resolve in its deep lines that added much to the majestic character of her appearance. Her teeth too were perfect, and her thin and colourless lips left them visible to attract the painful admiration excited by their contrast with the unlovely expression of her features. Her chin was small. Her hair was all drawn from her face to the crown of her head, and concealed under the black lace veil, which, concealing the upper part of her

forehead, fell over each shoulder even to her feet. Her upper garment was a long mantle of black velvet lined with ermine, which, opening in front, fell over the arms of her throne, and discovered a dress of crimson cloth of Bruges of that beautiful sort called *ecarlute*. The boddice was drawn tightly to her shape by rich gold cord, the ends of which, finished by heavy tassels, fell downwards to the edge of her robe. The crimson tunic reached only to her knees, and discovered an under dress of white Syrian silk, on which was a border of gold, evidently of oriental workmanship. Her hard bust was covered by many rows of the finest Asiatic pearls, and depending from her girdle was a rosary of jet, which sustained a richly embossed golden cross, probably enshrining a piece of wood of the true cross from Palestine. The small gold crown which circled her brows, and the sceptre she held, were evidently made by the same skilful artist—probably the work of the celebrated Erembert, Abbot of Wansfort. Her arms, which notwithstanding her towering stature, were disproportionately long, were covered by sleeves of the finest Bruges linen, which, however, only appeared at the shoulders and elbows, the rest of the arm being concealed by the crimson cloth which formed the tunic, and these were laced with gold cord down to the waist, where the Bruges linen formed a cuff. Her form was harsh and bony, and no grace of motion relieved its outlines; for she was so fearfully still, you might have thought the living form had been placed in sight of the Gorgon's head, and so transformed to stone. Her features seemed alike immoveable, all sunk into a dark, fixed, and settled discontent with life.

The twelve peers composing her council were all assembled when Guy and Baldwin, conducted by the chamberlain, presented themselves before her. They made their bows, in advancing from the door to the lower steps of the throne, and kneeling upon which, they asked her blessing.

No member nor feature of the lady moved, nor did the slightest agitation which could betoken any feeling either of welcome or displeasure, appear either in her look or voice, as she slowly uttered. "Sir Guy de Dampierre, Count of Flanders and Lord of Namur, welcome from the Holy Land—take thou my blessing." Sir Guy slowly rose and took his seat at the council board.

Baldwin shuddered as he looked upon her rosary of jet, for he thought upon her father. Perhaps she thought upon *his*, for no blessing awaited him from her cold lips. "Baldwin of Avesnes, we invite thee to a seat at the council board," was all she uttered. He arose, and placed himself by his brother.

CHAPTER V.

WHILE her chiefs are occupied in the council-chamber, we will return to Marguerite, who, though with children by two noble husbands, lived solitary and childless ; and, though reigning countess over two sovereign states, was left desolate in her greatness.

She was the younger of the two daughters whom Baldwin, crowned emperor of Constantinople, left in their infancy, on the third Sunday after Easter, A. D. 1204, when he set out to join the first crusade. In the following year he was made prisoner by the king of the Bulgarians, and was supposed to have died in his dungeons.

When the news of his death arrived in Europe, Jane, the elder, and consequent heiress to the rich states of Flanders and Hainault, was carried over to France, to be educated in the court of Philip Augustus ; and she was in due time married to Ferdinand of Portugal, who returned with her to Hainault.

The great lords of Flanders and Hainault never loved the French, and they were displeased that their future countess should imbibe the maxims and politics of the court of France. In order to prevent any further innovation, they chose one of their own body to be regent of the states, and guardian to the younger child Marguerite. Thus Bouchard d'Avesnes, in the flower of youth, became her protector, and as soon as she became of an age to feel the power of love, she imbibed an ardent passion for him. If he did not return her passion, he was at least flattered by her choice, and grateful for her preference. He became her husband, and two children, John and Baldwin, were the fruit of this union.

Bouchard had been consecrated Dean of Laon, and was

looking towards its future bishopric, at that time superior to the sovereignty of France in real power and riches, when the love of his ward arrested him in his career. When Marguerite least expected such a change, the court of Rome claimed its servant, annulled the marriage, but rendered the children legitimate.

Marguerite remained for months ignorant that her husband had himself solicited the interference of the pope, and it was only when Ada fled that the appalling conviction arose.

Love in a rugged nature is a deep and terrible passion ; with the countess it was the only impulse not entirely selfish. When, therefore, she discovered his falsehood, she vowed an implacable, unmingled, deadly hatred against her treacherous guardian and faithless husband, and everything dear to him. She nourished the hope that the day would arrive when she could make him know the agony he had inflicted on her. And with her curses were mingled vows never to desist from her purposes of revenge till they were perfectly matured.

The separation between Ferdinand and her sister Jane, rendered it little probable that any children should ever be born of this marriage, in defect of which Marguerite and her children were the immediate heirs of these rich states. She therefore determined on a second marriage, and chose William de Bourbon Dampierre, a simple knight, but of an illustrious family ; and Guy de Dampierre, and five other children were born to her previous to his death, which however took place before she became, by the death of her sister, Countess of Hainault and Flanders.

Thus years passed away ; but though her arm was powerless to execute it, her revenge slumbered not. The sons of her second marriage were become men, yet the direful feeling was not rooted out, nor had it lost its character ; and it was only when Ada was brought into her palace by the armed men appointed by the Countess to seek her out, that her sons had ever seen "the Black Lady" smile.

Ada sought to conceal her face. The Countess had the cruelty to force her to uncover it. Alas ! no traces of her youthful beauty remained. Her form had lost its symmetry and lightness, and the remains of deep and stormy passions rested on her brow. Long and fixedly did the lady look upon her ere she spoke, as if she sought by a single glance to pene-

trate the depths of her heart, and to read not only her present feelings, but every passion which had reigned there since their separation. When at length her rage found utterance, it was with the deep concentrated tones of malice, hatred, and revenge that she vented the following fearful malediction : "Hear !" she cried, while her tall, harsh form became yet taller, and her dark countenance became yet darker, from the mingled emotions of gratified passion and deadly revenge which raged within her — "Hear the curse which every night, ere my eyes have closed in rest, this voice hath uttered since I beheld thee not, which every morn my ears have drunk in greedily, more welcome than the softest music ere I have hailed the glorious rays of the returning sun. Hear this curse and tremble ! May those eyes which have so long been wanton in unholy fires, become bleared and dim with tears ! May that heart whose quick pulsation hath been quickened by unnatural desires, become callous and hard by suffering — as mine hath been !" And with these latter words the harsh didactic tone she had assumed changed suddenly to the quick, shrill accents of despair. But immediately recovering herself, she continued, "May every limb fall listless and fail you in that hour when you need them most ! May you tremble and flee before the face of imaginary danger, but when real peril approaches may you be dead to its arrival ! May your everlasting portion be with Judas the betrayer of the Lord, in the valley of death and darkness, when your fate here shall be fully accomplished ! May this curse rest on thee and thine, till thou receivest my pardon ; and may it fall in all its direful force on *me*, if ever I be induced to accord it ! Amen !"

Many of the household of the countess, besides the Dampierres, were present when Marguerite uttered this awful malediction. Her maidens threw themselves upon their knees, as if to deprecate its influence on those even who heard it. Her sons, with heads bowed low as if acknowledging her fearful power, were pale with consternation. And Ada ? She crouched in silent horror, while every nerve seemed to be unnaturally distended : her lips were unclosed, her eyes straining from their sockets, her hands clenched, and her brow fearfully contracted. She spoke not — she scarcely breathed, and was at length taken out in strong convulsions.

After her dread curse was uttered, the lady still looked upon

her victim, and her features assumed an air of satisfaction. Then a smile — “Ha! and can you feel too? — I *have* felt —” and the emphasis was frightfully expressive. Having uttered these few words, she sought her loneliness once more.

CHAPTER VI.

THE mercantile intercourse between England and Flanders began at a very early period; so early, that its date is lost in the obscurity of time.

Notwithstanding their commercial relations, the Flemings were very early a martial people; and their alliance was courted by different European states, particularly by the kings of England and of France.

So much was their military spirit esteemed, that many of our monarchs were content to purchase their alliance by annuities granted to different courts, and determinable with their lives. The contract was on both sides quite voluntary, and founded on mutual convenience; but the family feuds of Marguerite, which existed for some years, had exhausted her treasury, while they rendered the raising taxes difficult and uncertain. In balancing the ways and means to supply the deficiencies thus created, no method appeared so congenial to her wishes as to assume the payment of this annuity as a right. Whether she depended upon the internal feuds of his kingdom, or the declining health of the English king (Henry III.), to bear her through with impunity, does not appear; but she demanded a settlement of arrears, which she pretended to have been some time due, amounting to almost forty thousand marks, previously to the death of the old king. Her claim was instantly and indignantly rejected.

The haughty and imperious countess, regardless of the consequences to herself or her people, seized all the English merchandize in her dominions, though three-fourths of it had already ceased to be English property.

The English king had immediate recourse to retaliation, and by the seizure of Flemish produce raised the sum of eight

thousand pounds, which he divided in different proportions among the English merchants who had been the sufferers from the loss of their goods. At the same time the exportation of wool and wool-fells to Flanders was forbidden. He also invited the Flemish clothiers to come and settle in England, and offered a premium to induce them to accede to his invitation.

Notwithstanding his prohibition, it was discovered that wool and wool-fells were still introduced into Flanders, through the means of other foreigners. It in consequence became necessary to have recourse to strong measures, and upon the death of his father, his successor, Edward I., forbade, under severe penalties, the exportation of wool altogether.

When this edict was issued, Edward was absent in the same crusade which proved fatal to the French monarch. But the conclusion of a truce with the Saracens for ten years, enabled him to return to England. And as he was returning through Sicily and Naples he received intelligence of his father's death, and he hastened his preparations for his return to his own dominions, in order to make the arrangements necessary for his coronation.

The decisive measures he had employed, so clearly evinced his sense of the conduct pursued by the Countess Marguerite, that her obstinacy was for once subdued. She consented to make the apology the king of England insisted upon, as the preliminary step to an accommodation ; and Edward consented to receive her ambassadors at Montreuil, upon his return from the capital of France, where he had been to render homage to the young king for his lands held under that sovereign.

The countess appointed Guy de Dampierre and Baldwin d'Avesnes to this embassy, and they were accompanied by several Flemish noblemen. They found Edward attended by John of Brabant, who had agreed to his invitation to accompany him to Montreuil, in his way to Brussels from the French capital. At Montreuil, a deputation of English merchants awaited to aid him with their advice.

Thus was he surrounded and attended by many of his highest nobility, when the brothers were introduced. Edward received them standing, one hand resting on a table ; a position in which his majestic height appeared to peculiar advantage ; and the young king showed himself by no means

insensible to his personal attractions, for his finely turned limbs were well set off by the white knitted pantaloons which he wore. His tunic was of richly embroidered velvet, and his toque, placed gallantly upon one side of his head, was ornamented with a single ostrich feather, fastened in by a diamond aigrette. There was an assumption of lofty superiority about the expression of his countenance, different from vulgar pride or vanity, and which seemed rather to proceed from an internal consciousness of high deeds and lofty daring, than a wish to impose the belief on others; a conviction which the splendid reputation he had already acquired seemed well to warrant. The marked consideration with which he treated the merchants in his suite, showed a capacity to emancipate himself from the prejudices of his age, together with a thorough acquaintance with the only means that could raise the English nation to that pitch of greatness to which her commercial resources have since raised her.

His eyes sparkled and his cheeks glowed when the Flemish deputation was first introduced; but he sought to master this emotion, and with the delicacy of a truly generous mind, endeavoured by the studied courtesy of his manner to lessen the awkwardness of their situation.

When the ceremonies of introduction had been completed, Baldwin advanced one step nearer to the king, and said, "Sire, Guy de Dampierre, by the grace of God Count of Flanders and Seigneur of Namur, is come before you to express his regret that the Lady Marguerite, his mother, should have seized the goods of your subjects. She conceived she had a right to make that seizure; but through respect to your grace, and to obtain your friendship, she promises to make full reparation to the sufferers, and for the performance of this promise, the Count binds himself and his possessions to your Grace the King of England."

Edward gracefully replied, "Sir, I accept the offer made with so much humility by the Count, and with the greater confidence, because I know he was absent in the Holy Land when my subjects' property was seized, and I am informed also that he always disapproved the conduct of my Lady the Countess, his mother, which, though so injurious, we forgive."

Then calling the merchants in waiting to recapitulate their losses, it was agreed to accept the 8000*l.* levied on the goods

belonging to the Flemish merchants in England as a part of the reparation. And the commercial intercourse of the two countries was established upon its original footing.

During the continuance of this ceremony, Dampierre was too much absorbed in the interest of his mission to observe any thing beyond the general effect of the splendour surrounding Edward, and this seemed to him as if meant to reproach his disgrace. But when from the council-chamber they adjourned to the banqueting-room to partake of a luxurious entertainment, he startled as if he had beheld a spectre when he perceived Adenez Lekoi, the minstrel of the Duke of Brabant, before him. He was the living image of Ada. In vain he tried to persuade himself that his fancy deceived him, or that the resemblance was fortuitous. The nearer he approached the stranger, the more closely he watched him, the more striking did the resemblance appear. The same dark languid eye, with the narrow-pencilled eyebrow, the voice, every thing, even to the graceful indolence of attitude and motion, made the resemblance the more striking. The dark-minded Guy immediately made d'Avesnes acquainted with the nature of his observations, and the latter was himself astonished at the resemblance, and felt persuaded that there was some mystery attending the birth of the youth.

He therefore placed himself next to John de Waldenrod, one of the duke's gentlemen attendants, and as soon as an opportunity offered, inquired, "Who is this Adenez Lekoi, and how is it that you have never mentioned him to me?"

Waldenrod replied, "By St. Gregory, I could not divine that your highness would care aught for this well-reputed minstrel!"

"Why, in sooth, my mind is in your answer to my question. Who is this Adenez?" repeated Baldwin.

Waldenrod replied, "He is a youth brought up by the good fathers of St. Benoît at Wavre, where you know the duke's natural son, John de Méluive, was educated. This Adenez, though much older, is dearly loved by him, and the more so that they were both, the one and the other, intended for the frock; but Adenez refused to take the vows, and they say the boy was strengthened by Lekoi's repugnance."

"But his parents, where are they?"

"Nay, that is more than I can tell. There be various

reports upon that head. It is thought that he too is a child of mystery and sin," continued the narrator.

"'Tis strange," said Baldwin to himself; then aloud, "What are his tastes?"

"In good troth I know but little of him, yet he seems to have made some fair advantages of his gifts. They say he is a great clerk, and as expert at the 'Gai Science' as the princess herself," replied Waldenrod.

"The Gai Science and in a convent!" said Baldwin.

"Why, you know, in Wavre nought but the Romance language is spoken, and the holy fathers there love the art. 'Tis certain that our troubadour's harp was often employed, and that his talent in music is marvellous."

"And how does he spend his time?" again inquired Baldwin.

"Sometimes he paces for whole hours the cloisters of St. Géry; at other times he goes into the dark forest, and there, lying beneath the large old blasted oak that they say St. Hubert planted, he seems to forget the flight of time, and to care nothing for the wolves, though they be so bold and so ravening that they come down even to the town," replied Waldenrod.

"But does he not mingle with the politics of the court? nor seek to possess himself of the duke's ear?"

"No, he scorns riches; but they say he is much attached to the princess, and in all honour greatly loved by her," replied the gentleman.

"Enough," said Baldwin, lowering his voice. "We are observed; keep your eye upon him, and be you sure the Count of Flanders, my very noble brother, shall not forget you. Your annuity shall be regularly paid. But let your intelligence come direct to me, not to Sir Guy,—you understand?"

In repeating this account to Guy, all mention of the forest walks were carefully omitted by the politic Baldwin, who immediately formed a plan in which he hoped to derive advantage from this circumstance, and congratulated himself that Guy's dread of the Lady Marguerite had prevented his before informing her of his project of a union with the Princess Mary.

VOLUME THE SECOND.

THE
CURSE OF THE BLACK LADY.

A LEGEND OF THE TWELFTH CENTURY.

CHAPTER VII.

ON the return of the brothers from Montreuil, Count Guy, acting under the influence of Baldwin, asked a private audience of Marguerite. He entered her apartments as usual, and with an humble salutation to his mother, and kneeling upon her footstool, kissed her hand, and then proceeded to say; "The grand chancellor has doubtless put into your hands the conclusion of the treaty with England, thus so happily terminated?"

The Countess scarcely moved a muscle of her countenance, so discontented and dark, but made a slight affirmative motion with her head.

"But I have yet other intelligence of a mission with which you honoured me when I attended St. Louis to the Holy Land, and which my apparent failure made me hesitate to communicate; but now that two circumstances which seem to me of some importance give me hopes, I have obtained a clue——"

The countenance of Marguerite no longer exhibited a listless inanity. Every feature was animated with a fierce exultation. She invited Count Guy to a place at the table at which she was seated, and resting her head on her hand, she so nearly approached him that he felt her breath on his face as she was speaking. "Guy," she began with a forced and harsh voice, "so long a space hath elapsed since your expe-

dition, that I thought you had forgotten my message to the late King of France."

"Believe you then, Madam, that your commands could be forgotten? I importuned the king for many a weary day, and just before he died I asked a private audience. He yielded to my prayer. 'What wouldst thou?' said he, (and methinks his death-like, hollow voice still rings in my ear). 'Can the passion of revenge even now occupy thy mind, when thou seest a fellow mortal trembling on the brink of the grave, where all human passions lie buried with every human hope?'"

"*Every passion!*" said the Countess; "*I have but one. Every hope!* What hope is left for me?"

Count Guy continued. "'And tell the Lady Marguerite to forgive, as she would be forgiven.'"

"*I forgive?*" said the Countess, raising her head from her hand, and fiercely opening her eyes.

"Madam, I but repeat our conversation. But I said, O king, let but thy son yield up my mother's serf, Labrosse, or desire him to declare to the Countess where he hath placed the boy committed to his charge, as well as discover where is the mother of that boy."

"And what replied the king?" asked the Countess, with the most deep yet suppressed anxiety.

"'Go, tell your mother to forget her revenge.'"

An expression of contempt passed over the features of the Countess.

It was now Count Guy's turn to become restless and agitated. He rose from the table, remained for an instant opposite to his mother, then walked rapidly up and down the apartment, then again stopped near his mother, and, without looking at her, said, "I met with a marvellous strange circumstance as I came here last from Namur."

The lady raised her eyes to his face, but she spoke not.

Count Guy then began his narrative of his meeting with the Beguine in the forest, not forgetting her exhortation to him.

"And saw you her face?" said the lady, when he had finished his tale.

"I saw it, Madam, but not to note its features. It was ghastly pale, and when she held her hand up thus, it seemed transparent."

"And how long is it since this happened, say you?" asked the Lady Marguerite.

"Madam, when I came here to take counsel of the mission to Montreuil," replied her son.

"And why did you not then inform me of the circumstance?" inquired the lady.

The same reason which had prevented his speaking of it then, now again kept him silent. It was that he feared the dame. To change the conversation which was becoming unpleasant, as well as to ward off the question, he said, "I have another tale to greet your highness's ear."

"And how old may this next be?" inquired the dame, with sarcastic bitterness.

"Madam," replied her son, "'twas at Montreuil." Here he paused for a moment, as though he waited some encouragement from the lady. But no expression of feature or of action informed him that she had even heard him speak. She seemed buried in thought — or perhaps absorbed in her habitual discontent with life.

Count Guy proceeded. "The Duke of Brabant was found at Paris with Edward, and they travelled to Montreuil together, as I have already informed your Grace. The duke had with him a numerous train. Among his followers was a troubadour or minstrel — the living image of Ada — methought 'twas Ada's self. The same melancholy, the same bearing of the head a little towards the left shoulder, the same flowing locks ——"

"Ha! my son!" said the Countess, with a fearful emphasis on the interjection. "And have you secured the bastard?"

"How, madam! Under the protection of England's king and Brabant's duke? When I have bound myself by contract to the former to yield myself a prisoner at Montreuil* if I break the peace towards England? No! let us work by surer means. The whelp has all his mother's fascinations, and they say the Princess Mary loves him much. More than the duke or duchess even. Win we the lady, and the minion follows."

"What mean you, Dampierre?" asked the Countess.

Count Guy repeated Baldwin's demand of the hand of Mary, and the lady seemed to forget her bitterness towards him in her pursuit of the minstrel.

"But how?" she cried; "Baldwin has neither lands nor title?"

* This deed is in existence.

"But the Countess has both," replied Guy. "The Lord of Avesnes can aspire to the hand of the princess. Baldwin has talents, and better is it that they be employed for us than for our enemies. The inheritance, when his brother hath Hainault, will be his; to yield it now is only to anticipate his fortune."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE 19th of January is still kept in Brussels in commemoration of the return of Henry d'Assche from the Holy Land, where he had accompanied the kings of France and England. The festival is called the "Vrouwkens Avond," and the circumstances attending the welcome of the chief and his followers render it in general a scene of much mirth.

But an assembly of a far different description was collected in the ducal palace at Brussels in the year 1276, to commemorate the escape of their compatriots, for the banqueting room there sparkled with all that was beautiful in person, adorned with all that was costly in dress, at a period when the ladies of the Low Countries were celebrated all over the world for their beauty, and the countries themselves for their wealth. They were now crowded round the Troubadour, or court minstrel, who was reciting the history of the expedition in the rude poetry of the times. He sung how, "Henry d'Assche with his friends and followers went to the Holy Land. The way was long and dangerous, the foes strong and treacherous, and friends uncertain.

"How days, weeks, months, nay years passed away, and yet they came not back. Wives mourned their husbands, and children wept their parents, despairing of their return. At length the lord appeared with such of his own vassals as had escaped the influence of the sun, and the sword of the Saracens.

"Their joyful relatives were hastily assembled at the ample board, spread in the trophied hall of their lord, the horn of welcome passed rapidly round, and they caroused so long and deep that their wives were obliged to bear them to their couches."

The bard was young and handsome, and the most enthusiastic praises were lavished on his performance, for he was the favourite of Duke John of Brabant. He received the applause of his auditors with a bowed head, but his raised colour showed him not insensible to their praises. And his glowing glance became more and more enthusiastic while it fell on two young and beautiful damsels, like the rosy clouds of evening following the course of the setting sun and deepening as they imbibe his rays.

The youngest and most beautiful of the two noble dames to whose bright glances the harp seemed to respire in more animated strains, was Jane, a lineal descendant of that noble lord whose prowess in the Holy Land, and narrow escape from the dangers surrounding him there, the bard had just sung. She was small, almost diminutive; but the most delicate proportions marked the contour of her sylph-like form.

Her companion was less beautiful, if beauty depend on symmetry of feature; but her finely shaped head might have served as a model for a statuary. Her forehead was perfect; her brows, though clearly defined, being small and almost straight, and their light brown lines nearly descended to her hazel eyes.

But it was round the mouth that played the expression which so bewitchingly characterised her countenance, varying with every emotion of her soul. Her form, too, tall and dignified, was yet so nicely proportioned, and so much of grace regulated every movement, that it was almost as softly feminine as that of Jane.

Her robe was white and ample, made to fit to the bust, and confined round the waist by a girdle of pure gold.* The light brown hair was drawn up to the crown of her head, in the same manner as that of her companion, and confined there by a coronet of the same precious metal as her girdle, and from it a deep veil fringed with gold fell to her very feet; but so light was its texture, that her form was visible through its undulating folds; and the sleeves, large and open, showed her lovely arms to the admiring gaze.

This was the Princess Mary, who, turning towards the minstrel, as his voice sank into silence at the conclusion of the

* A woman whose character was not unimpeachable was not permitted to wear a golden girdle.

last stanza, said, "Sir Adenez, you appear inspired this evening; never before have I heard such melodious tones from your harp; never so much soul in your voice!"

"It is that I am inspired in chanting the prowess and the perils of the ancestors of this beauteous damsel," said he indicating with a softened glance the fairy form of Jane, "and by the smiles of my noble mistress," he added, bending to receive the chain of gold she threw around his neck, and which her brother's page, young William de Bethune, a son of Guy de Dampierre, presented to the Princess.

A slight change of her colour, and a scarcely perceptible tremor in the under lip, evinced there was something in the minstrel's speech that touched Mary nearly. She turned from him to the dark-haired page, whose youthful features but ill accorded with his passionate and marked expression as he followed every motion of the Princess with an eager gaze. She turned towards him, but she spoke not; and it was evident that her thoughts were pre-occupied; till he who had sought her notice with feverish anxiety, seized her veil and fondly pressed it to his lips. Then indeed she seemed to recover from her slight abstraction, and extended her hand to him, which he eagerly grasped to lead her up the room.

The dance and the feast succeeded to the music; and it was not till a late hour that the Princess retired.

As she approached her apartment, accompanied by Jane, she was surprised by the sight of a *religieuse* of the order of the Beguines, then recently established in Brussels. Her pale countenance seemed yet paler beneath the black veil which shaded it. Her form was beyond the middle height, and she was thin even to emaciation. She bent her head to the courteous salutation of the Princess, and as the latter sought to enter her apartment, she prostrated herself almost across the doorway, and lifting up her hands to heaven, and turning towards Jane, exclaimed, "Tell the Princess to hear my words and to listen to the admonitions of my mouth!" She paused as the form she had addressed leaned mechanically towards her, as if to enforce her attention, and continued—"O tell her that it is better to trust in the Lord, than to put any confidence in man!" Then elevating her voice, "Tell her it is better to trust in the Lord than to put any confidence in princes. For if she go astray from the land of her youth,

they shall persecute her without a cause. Woe, woe in Gallia ! Woe, woe in the great city ! For the proud have laid a snare for her ! Yea they have set traps in her way, and therefore shall her heart be desolate within her. Her love——”

“Love !” cried Mary, with thrilling accents, for the fire had passed from the eye of the prophetess, her face was no longer raised towards Heaven, whose behests she seemed obeying. And her voice sunk into silence as she vainly sought to finish the sentence. Her countenance became distorted, and her throat choked with emotion. She fled !

“And *Love !*” again cried the Princess, in tones of intense emotion. But the prophetess heard her not. She was gone. Nothing remained of her but the remembrance, which would not pass away.

The slumbers of the Princess were broken and unrefreshed. The form of the Beguine mingled with her dreams, and always appeared there associated with that of Adenez. And when the heated imagination of the Princess presented the nun again, it was with the dark eye of Adenez, sparkling in poetic fire, and the tones of his full rich voice, in all the enthusiasm of imaginative eloquence.

The day was already far advanced when the Princess awoke. Her first thought was of the nun. But it was in vain she inquired of the attendants respecting the prophetess ; except those near her person at the time, nobody had seen her.

When she went to pay her respects to the young Duchess, she was greeted with rather more than usual cordiality and kindness ; while a smile of some meaning accompanied her salutation. Having dismissed her attendants, she embraced the Princess a second time, while she said, “At length, my fair sister, my first wish is likely to be accomplished ; and you are about to fill the high station to which your every movement declares you to be born. My brother, Philip of France, has sent to demand your hand.”

O what a torrent of feelings rapidly rushed through the bosom of the Princess at this intelligence. To the calls of ambition she was by no means insensible ; but hers was not that vulgar ambition which looks to rank alone without elevation of sentiment or character. She could feel too ; for her high rank had not placed her beyond the sensibilities of our nature. In the midst of the storm of feelings which thus en-

grossed her heart, the prophecy of the Beguine, appalling as it was, presented itself to her mind. She had foreseen then this demand, and foretold a whole host of evils following close upon it? Yet, how avoid the fate thus thrust upon her, which her sister had welcomed, and which her brother would also, without doubt, support, as consolidating more closely the alliance of the two states? She felt she should be obliged to yield, however her heart might suffer in the struggle. She therefore turned towards the Duchess, and striving to repress the feelings which rendered her agitation too apparent, she replied, as courtesy dictated, to the congratulations of her sister; and begged to be allowed to retire, in order to be ready to receive the official notice, which she supposed would soon arrive.

The next day was appointed for her to receive the congratulations of the court. But a dark presentiment obscured all that was brilliant in the prospect before her, and exaggerated all the recollections of her childhood, which made her regret the past. To quit that home where she had been so happy; to leave her brother the duke, whom she loved so tenderly. To struggle against the vices, the cares, and the intrigues of a court! Another presented himself to her remembrance, and a shade of deeper thought came over her mind and flushed her cheek. She trembled at its intrusion, started from her chair, and paced the room, every motion indicating that some powerful feeling agitated her sensitive bosom, till she was interrupted by the appearance of William, her brother's page.

The boy looked upon her with an eager glance. But though his feelings were precocious, his reason was not enough matured to seek to divine what cause influenced the manner of Mary. But it was with evident reluctance he left her. When she descended, the Duchess met her at the door, and presenting her to the circle, was the first to congratulate her upon her approaching elevation. Every body crowded round her, and she received their compliments with much self-possession. A single glance told her that one, however, was wanting;—but that one had not forgotten her.

The harp's full vibrations were heard. And the note's rich swell evinced that no common hand, and no divided emotion waked that strain, where all breathed joy and gladness. And first he sang the maidenly graces and unrivalled beauty of the

Princess, for whom nobles sighed and princes contended ; then the brilliant qualities of her cultivated and powerful mind. But oh ! better than all, the virtues that glowed in her generous heart !

“ Beauty, talent, and goodness so superlative can only find their proper sphere on the most splendid throne. Happy the sovereign who can place her there. Thrice happy he, the bold son of the sainted monarch, who in gaining her heart, raises her to the only rank worthy her beauty, genius, and virtue ! ”

Yes, it was Adenez who raised the joyful strain. But not a single responsive emotion in the bosom of the Princess replied now to the notes of the bard. For the first time she was insensible to the influence of his art. The prophetess still exclusively filled her imagination, as she appeared in her dream, withering every hope — darkening every thought.

At length the bard himself approached, joy beaming in his eyes, animating his light step, and speaking in the lively tones of his voice — for his heart was filled with gladness. And the Princess ?

She received his congratulations with a coldness she could not repress. No compliment on his music evinced her sense of his talent. No animated smile informed him she approved his efforts employed in her praise. But a desire to know something more of the mysterious being who had so astonished and interested her, induced the Princess to confide to Adenez the extraordinary prophecy of the Beguine, and to entreat him to make every inquiry likely to facilitate her wish, in the part of the town appropriated to that community.

These societies seem to have been peculiar to the Low Countries. They were first instituted by a priest of Liège, named Lambert le Bègue, towards the end of the twelfth century.

They had an establishment at Ghent which was the largest in the country. It was founded by Jane, the late, and richly endowed by Marguerite, present Countess of Hainault and Flanders. There was also one consisting of 2000 nuns at Nivelles.

That of Brussels was of yet more recent origin : having been founded in the year 1250. The first five Beguines were the daughters of a farmer at Goych ; but at the period of our minstrel's visit, they amounted to some hundreds.

The vows of the community did not compel them to perpetual celibacy. They were professed for only seven years, at the end of which time they were permitted to lay aside the veil and return to the trials and pleasures of the world.

They were not domiciled under one roof like other religious communities ; but had each her separate habitation, unadorned except by the modesty, humility, and tranquil resignation of its unpretending inhabitant. The Beguines seemed united for mutual edification and the practice of those virtues so difficult to preserve in the vortex of corrupt society. They were constantly occupied ; needle-work, prayer, and meditation employed them in turn. Their manners were reserved, almost severe, in the every day relations with the world, the morals of which were at that time frightfully corrupt. In fine, the subjugation of every passion to the service of the Almighty seemed to be the end and aim of their existence.

Adenez was accompanied in his walk by William de Bethune. And as they descended the town, they passed before the modest building appropriated to the reception of the hermits of St. Augustine. This was situated near the Beguinage ; and Adenez, if not so restlessly interested as the Princess to seek the elucidation of the mysterious language held by the nun, yet participated enough in her curiosity, to feel the desire of seeing this inexplicable prophetic infinitely predominate over every other consideration. Though much interested in this society he did not pause to visit it ; but proceeded to the Beguinage, which, in the midst of the populous city of Brussels, formed a little town apart. It consisted of thirty-two streets, or *ruelles* ; and the perfect neatness and almost uninterrupted quietness of this enclosure, formed a striking contrast to the noise and bustle, the hurry and confusion of the world beyond its walls.

In every corner where it was possible to place a sketch, a representation of some scriptural history was discovered. Adam and Eve in Paradise, placed at each side of the tree of knowledge of good and evil ; the apple which was to entail so much of misery upon her frail descendants yet uneaten in the hand of Eve. And the want of the truth and nature which have since so eminently distinguished the artists of the Netherlands, was supplied, if not compensated, by gaudiness of colouring and strongly marked outlines. In another place,

was a carving in wood of the crucifixion, with the weeping Magdalen at the foot of the cross, or the Virgin bearing the dead body of the Saviour on her knees, while the seven daggers pierce her heart.

Then again, behind rude latticed-work, Our Lady glittered all resplendent in blue and gold, made doubly brilliant by the flickering lights placed in a row before her, to mark the piety or the superstition of the sainted maidens of the society.

Adenez had passed a moat with a drawbridge, when a heavy gate creaked on its hinges, to give him admission through the thick wall which surrounded the little community. All means of entrance was closed every night at eight o'clock, beyond which period no man was permitted to be within its walls nor was any egress allowed after that hour.

They found but few people about the streets, but while they were yet examining the works of art we have been describing, the bell sounded for church service, and each house poured forth its inhabitants, who with that tranquil air which so particularly marked the Beguines entered with noiseless step the spacious church to which Adenez and his young friend, the page, followed without further ceremony. As he passed among them to enter their temple, Adenez minutely examined every figure, and looked with world'y irreverence into every pair of fine eyes. And many a veil was drawn demurely and closely over the features which he so nicely scrutinised. But though he looked round with a most poetical determination to find the prophetess, not even the eye of a poet could imagine any thing approaching to supernatural inspiration in the statue-like figures by which he was surrounded. There was indeed the black robe so accurately described by the Princess; the band of white sendel across the tranquil forehead; the short black veil demurely pinned on each side the temple, together with the snowy lawn with which it was lined, and the white guimp which covered the bust. But that look which spoke of communion with beings beyond this world, and which denoted an intimate correspondence with things mysterious if not forbidden, he sought in vain.

Mortified with his useless search, he listened to the request of William, that he would return through that part of the town which is now called the Putteric, but which was then occupied by the convent of the Templars. Who, at that

moment, looking towards their splendid establishment with its massive walls, its numerous windows, the spacious doors, from which were seen issuing its lordly tenants, bearing in their person that mixture of character, that union of the two institutions then held to be the most sacred, that combination of chivalry and religion, which it seemed the height of human ambition to attain, could have supposed it leaned so nearly towards its fall?

The page having expressed a desire to go in and visit the Templar Hildebrand, Adenez readily consented to accompany him.

The Templar having immediately obeyed the porter's summons, presented a noble bearing, having however more of the warrior than of the churchman in his appearance. Disdaining even the affectation of the humility which had characterised the founders of his order; and could the term have been applied to the loftiness which seemed to emanate from conscious superiority of mind, his deportment might have been called haughty. Perhaps majesty would better have designated his peculiar manner.

He approached the boy and took him kindly by the hand, while he proceeded to those inquiries that might have been deemed of mere courtesy, had not their extreme minuteness, united to an earnest seriousness and a warmth and cordiality in the tones of the voice, given a character of lively friendship to the words. He then, following the page's glance, turned towards his companion, and had begun his compliments in the most polished language, when his eyes suddenly became rivetted on the countenance of his visitor, with an intensity of feeling which spoke at once in his quivering lip and agitated brow. His emotion was but momentary, and he recovered himself sufficiently to apologize for its display by imputing his agitation to the very close resemblance his visitor bore to a dear friend. He then made known his desire to become acquainted with Adenez.

The conversation soon turned upon the marriage of the Princess; and the Templar asked: — "Do you, Sir Minstrel, accompany your noble mistress to France?"

"It would be a very severe privation for me to be separated from the Princess," replied Adenez. — "Yet it will also be exceedingly painful to leave the Duke and Duchess, to be

established among perfect strangers!" — He paused for a minute before he added. — "Notwithstanding this, I would willingly believe that the Prince, who hath gained the epithet of 'The Bold,' is not unworthy the hand of my noble mistress, the Princess Mary. You know him, Sir Hildebrand?"

"Yes," replied the knight; "I knew him in Africa."

"He has been placed in circumstances of considerable difficulty, from which he has frequently extricated himself with singular boldness and address. But though he did thus advance beyond the hopes of his friends, I thought I perceived in him an indecision, which leads me to apprehend that he does not possess much real strength of character. And the manner in which he suffers himself to be so strangely governed by his barber, Labrosse, seems to confirm my suspicions."

"But he is capable of loving, and of rightly estimating a creature so superior as our Princess!" said Adenez, anxiously.

"If the Princess will condescend to manage him, she will indeed be a blessing to France, and——" but here the Templar checked himself.

"And this Labrosse! How is it, that from so low a station he hath arisen to so high a post?" asked Adenez.

"Nay, Sir Minstrel," answered his companion, "that is a puzzling question, and to answer it properly I ought to be able to penetrate the very depths of the human heart. Perhaps he has persuaded the young monarch that in accepting his favours, he loves him for himself alone. Perchance he hath persuaded him that in protecting those whom the late king patronised, he proves that he inherits the saintly wishes of his father; perchance——"

"I see, I see," said Adenez impatiently, and then continuing in all the ardour of an imagination powerfully excited by his subject. "O Sir Templar! Could you but read my heart! Could you know from what a pure motive I desire to have my doubts as to the king's character decided, you would approve even if you were to decline answering them. The heart of the Princess is formed of the softest, best, and most angel-like attributes of our nature. With an understanding which, though so superior, is entirely unfitted for a commerce with the world;—with a mind amply stored with the richest imagery, she cannot look upon aught so hateful as vice. Is she wronged—does she see meanness predominating over modest

or unpretending worth, her indignation is keen — but let the oppressor in his turn become unfortunate, she soon conceives him to be reformed and restores him to her bosom. You, Sir Hildebrand, know far better than I can, the dangers to which such a character is exposed in a court — and in such a court as that of France !”

“Such as you have described, I ever believed the Princess ; and willingly would I point out some means of freeing her from the dangers which await her there, could I see any equally powerful with her own uprightness and the benevolence of her disposition. Her unsuspecting nature may indeed lead her into snares, but sooner or later it must be rightly known and felt. Labrosse I know not ; yet I think there is some mystery lurking under his rapid advancement !” Then lowering his voice almost to a whisper, “Keep an active eye upon him.”

“But the king !” exclaimed Adenez, with that irritable impatience so frequently the attendant of the poetic character, “Is he capable of loving and of appreciating the Princess ?”

“In good truth,” replied the Templar, “he was never thought to be deficient either in affection or principle. The only danger is, lest the one should be opposed to the other by artifices. Princess Mary has only to be seen and known to be loved, and this is much. For you, Sir Minstrel,” added the Templar, significantly, “look you do not fall.”

“I !” replied Adenez ; “I am too insignificant to serve even as a mark to their shafts.”

The conversation that followed was desultory and uninteresting, and Adenez soon after took his leave ; to wander silent and sad ; to muse over the mysterious destinies of man ; to ponder upon the perverseness of his own fate ; to regret his cloister ; and finally to dwell upon the fortunes of the Princess, and to lose all thought of self in revelling in fancied scenes, of which her beautiful image was the grace and the glory.

CHAPTER IX.

DURING the time that intervened before Mary's departure for the French court, an uninterested spectator might have sup-

posed that the Princess had forgotten her friendship for the minstrel, as their usual familiar interchange of thought and sentiment was completely interrupted. Mary seemed to be entirely engrossed by preparations for the change in her situation, and the minstrel, by his own reflections. Yet a more accurate observer might have noticed the rapid change of colour upon the pale cheek of Adenez, when Mary spoke of her departure. If the Princess on her part seemed regardless of the presence of her poet, yet her eye invariably detected his departure, and perhaps a light sigh followed him.

At length the dreaded moment arrived ; and, accompanied by her brother and many of the nobles of his court and followed by a numerous train of attendants, Mary left Brussels. As long as she could distinguish the dark towers which rose, side by side, in frowning majesty above the stately church, which covered the ashes of St. Gudule, she continued to gaze on them, but when a turn of the road hid them too from her sight, she stopped her horse to take a last farewell of the spot where she had been so happy. "Adieu !" she cried, "land of my love, with this view vanishes all hope of future peace !" Tears choked her voice, and she wept for some moments with a bitterness which resisted consolation. Her brother sought in vain to turn her mind towards the pleasures, splendour, and honours that awaited her. She found it impossible to shake off the dark presentiment which obscured every glance towards the change in her situation.

It was only on the fourth day they approached Paris ; not, as now, great in architectural magnificence, for the houses were generally of wood, thatched, low, and without chimneys. Nor did the dwellings of the great exhibit that style of lofty grandeur which the next century produced, and which Mary's own town already partially exhibited. But Mary was young, and endued with that happy flexibility of character which usually attends sensibility and genius. Her sadness faded away before the indications of joy and gladness with which her approach was every where hailed. The whole population, nobles, students of the university, and common people, all poured out beyond the walls to meet their young Queen, yielding themselves up to that enthusiasm of feeling, that fondness for loving an anticipated good, for which the Parisians were ever remarkable. Her fears and dark forebodings were

dispelled by the contagion of sympathy ; and with a glad and lightsome heart she bowed her head in return to these acclamations, till it almost touched the neck of her beautiful Spanish jennet, as she penetrated the thick crowd, which, while it welcomed her approach, impeded her progress. All was pleasure ; and when she descended at the steps of the palace where Philip waited her approach, suitably attended to receive her, he found her countenance radiant with joy.

The Princess was allowed three days to recover from the fatigues of her journey, during which time those who were nearest the person of the king were encouraged to render themselves agreeable to their future queen. The young princes were also presented to her, and she was affected even to tears as she promised the king (who with Jane were the only witnesses to this interview) to supply to them the parent of whom they had been bereaved. Philip was touched with these marks of sensibility, and whispered some expressions of ardent gratitude and love, which called the blush to her cheek ; while the sigh that trembled on her lips, from whatever sentiment it might arise, excited in him new expressions of devotion.

At length the day of the coronation arrived, when the praises of Mary, the beautiful, the good, were sung to the sounds of hundreds of musical instruments, and fifes, viols, drums, psalteries and harps united in multifarious harmony. to carry the theme to the remotest corners of her new kingdom. While, notwithstanding the University of Paris enclosed thirty thousand students, even philosophers forgot the spirit of dispute.

Every street was gay in various colours to welcome her return from the coronation ; the poorer houses were covered with branches of trees and flowers ; and from the windows of the palaces were suspended the richest tapestry, intermixed with coloured streamers, armorial bearings, and lighted candles.

The principal owners of these splendid residences were equally resplendent in robes perfectly new, prepared for the occasion ; and to such a pitch had the luxury of the times arrived, that their dresses were changed three times in one day, and each change showed a robe more splendid than the last.

All the different liveries followed in procession before the windows of the palace, each bearing in front the banner indicating its profession.

But the most prominent feature in the novelties of the day were the little theatres, erected at each corner where streets crossed; and when the cloth curtains, of Brussels manufacture, were withdrawn, various scenes were represented; such as the infancy of the dramatic art, then newly introduced from the East, might be supposed to furnish: but with the idea, little of the poetical inspiration which the poets of the East, beyond any other in the early ages, had displayed, was observable. Drawn from a source which supplied to the sister arts of poetry, painting, and music all that was sublime in conception or grand in execution, the mysteries, which consisted in facts drawn from holy writ, were arid and vulgar. The Saviour of the world was depicted eating an apple, presented to him by St. Joseph and smiling in the arms of the Holy Virgin. The next scene discovered him repeating paternosters with the Apostles, and the last act in this rough picture, showed Him raising up the dead to judgment.

In another of these representations the blessed were seen singing praises in Paradise, attended by angels with gaudy wings, while in an opposite department, sinners were discovered writhing in eternal punishment, while devils, whose mouths flamed fire and brimstone, laughed in spite at their misery.

Those from the Old Testament showed Adam and Eve, rambling hand in hand through the beautiful garden, cyeing with longing looks the luscious apples shining in all the tempting array of red with yellow streaks, through the bright green leaves of the loaded tree. Above, the serpent writhing round its stem, with upreared head and protruded tongue, as he gave his insidious counsel to the weaker vessel. The next act showed how, with beguiling words and yet more seducing looks, she tempted her loving partner to participate in her guilt; and her punishment formed the subject of the last act of this eventful history.

In other theatres of similar form pieces called satires were enacted. One contained a wicked allusion to the Pope, (Boniface VIII.) who was personified under the emblem of a fox, whose cunning eye showed rather mundane than spiritual desires. Reynard was at first a simple clerk, chanting an epistle; next a bishop's mitre graced his brow, while the same insidious glance, though cast on the earth in feigned humility, still be-

trayed a worldly ambition. At length his pointed ears were half concealed by a triple tiara, and his bushy tail peeped from beneath the magnificent robe of the Pope, while he no longer sought to conceal his carnal appetites, but devoured such dishes as the taste of the times denominated luxuries, with a marvellous rapidity.

Tom Fool then, as now, upon every popular occasion, seems to have taken a conspicuous part in the amusements of the multitude, capering, gambolling, and tumbling.

Then was a display of animals brought from the tropical climates, marching two and two in most orderly procession; the most unmanageable chained, and the fiercest muzzled. They were paraded from a building representing Noan's Ark.

Here was also a Lilliputian tournament, at which children tilted in knightly armour, brandishing their minniken spears.

And many were the groups of dancers that enlivened this motley assemblage, where ladies flourished à-la-ronde.

Fountains poured forth wine, at which the animated populace quaffed to the health of the beauteous queen, while they shouted "Largesse" to the bounteous giver, surveyed by groups of persons under different disguises, whose quaint appearance gave somewhat of the character of a modern carnival to the motley scene.

On the last day of this wedding festival the *bourgeoisie* of Paris marched in regular order from the church of Nôtre Dame, well armed and neatly dressed, to the number of thirty thousand foot, and twenty thousand horse, and defiled past the house where King Philip and his fair bride were stationed at the open window.

CHAPTER X.

SHORTLY after the marriage of the young queen, Guy de Dampierre came to Paris.

Formerly, when his business or pleasure required his attendance there, Labrosse had always a convenient illness, or some mission beyond the walls, or such an immense overflow of business that any communication with Count Guy, beyond

what his official duties as grand chamberlain imposed, seemed to be impossible. But now Labrosse himself sought his society ; and, as the desire of a private conference was mutual, they were soon closeted together.

The Count began by lamenting that the infatuation of Labrosse's father, in deserting the protection of the Lady of Hainault, his mother, had deprived him of the talents of the grand chamberlain, and his mother of the pleasure of heaping honours on one so deserving of much more than she could offer him. He then proceeded to say, that notwithstanding the defection of the father, the son might yet reckon on his good offices if he could make up his mind to leave France ; adding, with a sneer, " The favour of kings is uncertain, and there are those who prophesied that the honours of this court would for the future travel round by the way of Brabant."

Labrosse replied warily to this harangue. But though his words expressed the most entire confidence in the goodness of the king, yet in his manner he suffered the Count of Flanders to perceive that he was not quite satisfied with his situation.

"Who," said Guy, looking steadily at the chamberlain, "is this Troubadour, this Adenez?"

"Who?" replied Labrosse, with such evident astonishment at the question that his companion could not for the instant believe it assumed. "Know you not that he is the queen's favourite minstrel, and brought by her from Brabant?"

"But," said the son of the Black Lady, "know you ought of his parentage and connexions?"

A simple reply in the negative convinced Guy of Labrosse's sincerity. But where then was the son of Ada? If against the evidence of all his senses, and of that strong internal conviction, resulting from so close a similarity that even the choice of words and the construction of phrases, as well as every action, struck on his wondering eyes and ears,—if this living image of her very self be not her son, where is the boy?

Lost and bewildered, he turned again to Labrosse, and asked, — "Heard you ever your father speak of the last service the Lady Marguerite required at his hands, and which would have been most nobly requited had he not fled her thanks?"

"Indeed, Count, my father conversed often upon the failure of that enterprise which caused his flight."

"How!" retorted Guy, with one of those dark looks he inherited from his mother. "Do you trifle with me? Know you not that St. Louis himself was informed by your father of the existence of that boy?"

"Stop, Count," coolly interrupted the Grand Chamberlain; "we begin now to understand each other, and methinks may both be satisfied if we come to terms of mutual agreement. Give me but a sufficient pledge that when I want protection and support I shall find it in one of the Countess's extensive states; that I shall be aided by you and the noble Dame your mother in my own plans for vengeance, and *yours* shall not be neglected."

Guy joyfully caught at the idea. The preliminaries were soon arranged; and Guy himself feigned indisposition to colour his protracted residence at Paris. While thus confined, Labrosse, in furtherance of his plan, told the denouement of poor Ada's story.

"When you, Count," he began, "brought the lady from the states of Brabant, and when he you left there had been also baffled in his attempts to find the partner of her guilt, it was intended, I believe, to keep the prisoner still in hopes of liberation, till her other victim was also in the power of the Countess your lady mother, in order that her vengeance falling on both at once, might at the same time be full and signal. In conformity with this plan, the attendants were instructed to indulge her in such fancies as might solace her confinement; and that even all attempts to escape should apparently be encouraged, in the hope that the dean's retreat might by this means be discovered. But notwithstanding every effort on the part of those in waiting, the lady seemed to lose alike her hopes and spirits. She grew more and more feeble, her cheek became paler, and the darkest melancholy obscured her life. In short, every symptom of some internal malady appeared.

"My father, who, besides his ability as a surgeon, enjoyed some reputation as a skilful leech, was called in to prescribe for her; and he soon discovered that she was far advanced in pregnancy. Then the poor lady entreated him with sighs and tears to conceal this circumstance from the countess. My father promised all she desired, but he did not forget his duty to the countess, for immediately upon quitting his patient he proceeded to inform the Lady Marguerite of what had passed.

"How often has he described to me the fearful triumph which sate upon my lady's brow, when she understood the situation of her victim,—what rich rewards she promised him, when the whole nest of vipers should be crushed together !

"Won by my father's artifice and the deep sympathy he expressed in her misfortunes, the lady wrote a letter to the King of France, which she entrusted to his care, under a promise that my father would himself take the child to Paris, and place him under Louis's protection. He went directly to the Lady Marguerite, and discovered to her the project of her prisoner."

"But she knew not of the letter?"

"She knew *not* of the letter, Count. At length the child was born; and by the desire of the Lady Marguerite, my father was at his post to receive it. He had just wrapped it closely in his cloak, when a Templar came up and inquired what he was doing there? My father was lightly armed. The Templar insisted upon seeing his burden. He took the child from my father, and instantly disappeared with his infant burthen — 'tis all I know."

"Infamous liar and scoundrel!" said Guy; "dare you attempt to impose this tale upon me? Know to your shame the king acknowledged having received the child — where then is it placed? Disappoint again my vengeance, and ——"

"Fair and softly, Count Guy. Let me finish my tale, and you will find nothing inconsistent with this acknowledgment of the king. When the child was thus snatched from my father's grasp, just at the moment when he thought his fortune made, the fear of the anger of the countess paralysed every faculty. This was two hours before midnight; ere any suspicion could be excited by our absence, he, with my mother and myself, then also an infant, were far on our road to Paris. And then it was that my father communicated to my mother his design to present me as the child of the Lady Ada. And the imposition was the easier, because in her letter the lady stated no recent particulars, but referred to my father for all information on that subject. It briefly recapitulated her early faults and sorrows.

"My father therefore sent the letter to the king, and easily obtained admission to his presence; supported his interroga-

tions and made a most pathetic appeal to his heart in behalf of the orphan boy. He stated also, the imminent danger in which the life of the child would be placed, should the 'Black Lady' discover its retreat. My father, therefore, received the royal commands, that I should be brought up as Labrosse's child — he supposing the Lady Ada to be my mother. That, to set aside all suspicion, I should be educated to succeed to his situation, and he was made surgeon to the king. He commanded also that I should be privately taught, besides, all that might prepare me to fill a situation in the state, better fitting my supposed birth and connexions. I think also, his Grace wrote to the Lady Marguerite to implore her clemency for Ada."

"He did!—And was he not privy to her escape?"

"Escape!—And did the poor Ada indeed escape?"

"The poor Ada! You are—deny it not—you are in truth that son?"

"Would to God I had that honour! Then I should not be so killingly alive to the contemptuous glances with which the queen thinks fit to greet me. But had you seen my father's tears when he spoke of her anxious cares about this infant!—But how was her escape effected?"

"Why, have you not heard of her disappearance?"

"My father was made acquainted with it, but always thought that the fearful Lady Marguerite, exasperated that the child escaped her vengeance——"

"No, my lord chamberlain; her plan was so cunningly laid, that it appears no one about her suspected her intentions. She fretted much that she received no tidings of her child; and wept when the attendants, who were about her at his birth, were removed; a precaution taken by the Countess from the belief that they were in league with your father. And one morning she disappeared. Neither servant nor sentinel could give any information by which to trace her. Sometimes we think she destroyed herself, but no traces of her remains were ever found."

The continuation of this conversation was made up by a discussion of the plans to be pursued in furtherance of their schemes. The first object was to discover if Adenez were indeed the son of Ada and to seek some means to destroy the king's confidence in Mary. Labrosse was particularly desirous to crush them both at one blow.

CHAPTER XI.

THE sensibility which Mary had displayed as she received the flattering testimonies of approbation which seemed to emanate from the whole French nation, together with the deep feeling evinced by her when the king had recommended his children to her tenderness, had created in his bosom a most ardent attachment, which the graces of her mind could not fail to ripen into passionate love.

Unhappily for the queen, hers was a character which, though sure to be loved by those who knew her intimately enough to comprehend the beautiful singleness of her mind, was not constituted to be generally popular. She was exceedingly high-minded, and scorned by any trickery to solicit the approbation she was conscious of deserving and ought to command. She treated the openly worthless with contempt; the weak with indifference; and this necessarily reduced those she admitted to her familiarity to a very small number, as none were found among them but such as were eminently distinguished for worth or talent. Of favourites she had very few, for she was fastidious alike from principle and feeling. She desired to be considered the protectress of virtue and the patroness of talent; and as a taste for learning had been encouraged under the late king, it rendered her fostering care very grateful to a little society lately risen up in France, under the name of the "Gay Society of the Seven Troubadours."

Schools of rhetoric, in which verse appears to have been cultivated with more zeal than success, had been established very early in Belgium; indeed one at Alost dates from A. D. 1107. These societies probably owed their foundation to troubadours from the east, brought here by Crusaders, as their uncouth efforts were almost exclusively devoted to celebrate the exploits of these soldiers of the Cross. And certainly nothing could be more likely to awaken the slumbering imagination than the fanciful imagery of those southern climes, grafted upon the wild legends of northern Europe. Indeed, the knightly character itself could only have been formed by such a mixture of empassioned feeling and wild barbarity.

At the termination of the manifestations of joy which hailed her arrival with so much splendour, she received a deputation from the society just mentioned, the idea of which had been borrowed from her country, to lay at her feet the golden violet, the emblem of the art to which they were devoted.

She received the deputation with much state. At her right was the Rector of the University of Paris, then holding a rank even with the princes of the blood. Adenez was at her left hand, and the *Sieur de Joinville*, the historian, of the sainted king, was supported by him.

The deputation was introduced, and the golden violet, presented by its president, was received by the princess with evident pleasure.

Adenez, in the midst of all the happiness and honour which seemed to court his acceptance, was restless and unhappy. It was as if a presentiment of misery weighed down and oppressed his soul. Was it that distaste for life, that disdain for every thing within the grasp of man, which so frequently oppresses those endowed with superior mental powers? Or was it, that having fixed his affections on one who could neither understand nor appreciate his character, he was now first awakened from his delusive hopes? It is true, that dazzled by the extraordinary beauty of Jane, he had too hastily arrayed her in all the splendid colouring of a lively imagination. In her love he had expected a balm for every sorrow, in her mind he had looked for counsel; for in *Brabant* she had been modest, affectionate, and natural; but her head seemed to be completely turned by the homage offered to her beauty, and she had become selfish, coquettish, and vain. The lady of the grand chamberlain had aided *Labrosse's* endeavours to wean her from Adenez and from her fidelity to the queen.

Thus mutual discontent took place of the confidence which formerly reigned between them; and the chamberlain foresaw but little difficulty in inducing her to fill the place he had intended for her in the tragedy he was preparing.

Adenez, though no fanatic, was deeply impressed with the truths of a religion which then held so prominent a place in the actions and destinies of mortal men. At that time none professed an indifference they did not feel; for to be indifferent was accounted disgraceful; and no mind harboured a

conception that among its professing members avowed enemies to its pure precepts could be found.

The minstrel had been attending the first mass very early in the morning, when he was struck by the appearance of a man closely wrapped in a mantle, and who had twice passed him at a very short distance. Having thus attracted his attention, the stranger approached him yet more closely; and lowering his voice almost to a whisper, he inquired, if he desired to know aught of his birth, wrapt as it was in such deep mystery. Adenez started: for content with a fate which seemed happier than that of all around him, he had scarcely remarked that those by whom he had been patronised had no natural claims on his heart. The question surprised him; and he paused, unable to reply. He turned towards the stranger, as if in expectation that he should continue the conversation he had begun in so extraordinary a manner. The latter seemed to understand his appeal, and was about to answer, when a third person coming up, he again passed Adenez, saying, in a very low but distinct voice, "Be in the Rue St. Jaques to-night at eight." And he walked rapidly away.

The circumstance acted in a most extraordinary manner upon the mind of Adenez. In proportion as he had before been indifferent to the early events of his life, he now became alive to the feeling of loneliness in the world, which his perception of the want of any connexion, however remote, occasioned. He retraced in his mind every circumstance, whether of pleasure or of pain, that had attended his youth; but he could not collect the remotest idea of any thing which could call for an interference such as that he had encountered. As soon as a circumstance so extraordinary, acting upon an enthusiastic and romantic mind, could allow sufficient calmness, he demanded an audience of the queen; and when the requisite forms of etiquette upon his introduction were over, he somewhat abruptly inquired, "If she knew aught of his parents?"

"Nay, now, Sir Adenez," replied the queen, with much sweetness. "Are not Brabant's rulers your parents, and am not I your sister?"

"Your grace is always too good," replied the bard, while his eye glistened with the emotion that agitated his heart.

"But even your condescension, my gracious queen, cannot make me forget that I have this morning been most painfully reminded how entirely unknown to me are those to whom I owe my being."

The queen paused an instant. "And to me also," she replied in a low tone, after some minutes' reflection, as if the reply was an answer to her own reminiscences, rather than the inquiries of Adenez, which she appeared to have forgotten; and he almost forgot them himself as he gazed upon Mary's countenance, where the various thoughts that chased each other so rapidly in her mind left their impression on a face so beautiful in all those feelings that render woman lovely. At length his royal mistress spoke. "Indeed, Sir Bard," she said, "I have not the slightest recollection that I ever heard them mentioned. But why does the idea now recur to you, when so many years have passed in happy ignorance?"

Adenez could only detail his extraordinary rencontre in the morning, which interested and astonished the queen. "But surely, Adenez," said she, her curiosity fading away before a recollection of the Beguine's strange prophecy, and which a conversation so mysterious recalled to her mind.—"Surely you will not go to the place appointed?"

"Your grace," replied the bard, with cheeks glowing and eyes sparkling from the emotions thus created, "who have received the fond pressure of a mother's lips, and who have been reared beneath the sunny smiles of paternal tenderness, can have no idea of the tumultuous feeling which rushes to the heart when it first comprehends the possibility of having a new and powerful tie added to its other enjoyments. A mother! A father! O let me taste but one half hour of the feeling that throbs in the bosom of a duteous child.—Let me but once,"—he continued, but here his voice trembled, "let me but once be permitted to honour my father and mother, and let Fate do her worst!"

Sensibility beamed in every feature of Mary as she heard this ardent avowal. "Go then, Adenez," she cried; "but recollect I do not court my pillow till I hear the success of your mission. Come therefore to my audience when you return, but be careful to let the Grand Chamberlain introduce you, and it shall be my care that Jane be present."

Adenez yet lingered. The queen smiled. "What now,

Sir Minstrel; something in my arrangement pleaseth you not! What is it?"

"Paris is not Brussels," he replied, smiling, though it was in sadness. "There be heads which become light in the atmosphere of this gay city, and hearts which change with every climate."

"But Jane does not possess such," said the queen, somewhat affected by his tone.

Adenez bowed, but made no reply. The queen extended her hand, which he pressed to his lips as he repeated "Rely on my discretion." And he left her.

At the appointed hour he did not fail to repair to the Rue St. Jacques, when he was soon joined by the stranger, who silently motioned him to follow. They proceeded along one or two dark streets, only lighted by an occasional shrine or image, before which a solitary candle had been placed by some pious votary, when they found themselves beneath a low and narrow archway, which was the entrance to a dark, silent, and apparently deserted passage; at the end was a heavy door, through which they passed.

Adenez found himself within a room of narrow dimensions almost divested of household furniture, but surrounded by shelves blackened by smoke and dust, on which were placed phials of various colours, dried simples, rude gallipots, and cakes of yellow wax. The floor was strewn with crucibles, pincets, and clay moulds. In the middle glared, fierce and red, a furnace filled with burning charcoal, which cast a lurid glare athwart the unplastered walls.

Having hastily cast his eyes over the apartment, he next turned them towards his guide, who having thrown aside the mantle in which his long lean form was enveloped, discovered a Jewish countenance, in which the long hooked nose and keen rambling eyes were very marked and striking. His hair was black and frizzled, his beard bushy, his ears large. But what was most particularly striking was the immoderate length of his hands and feet, and the extreme looseness of his joints, which gave a tottering air to his gait. His teeth were as pearls, white and regular, but set within a pair of lips so pale and skinny that the mouth added to the singular deformity of the person.

"I am here," said Adenez, finding his companion made no effort to commence a conversation. "Now what would you?"

"Nay, Sir Minstrel," said the creature, grinning malignantly; "it is not I—it is you who are come here to unravel a mystery."

"A mystery! And what mystery, stranger, can attach to my existence?"

"Go seek it in the church if thou wouldst know thy father!"

"My father! In the church!—Explain!"

"Thy father was a deacon in the church of Laon.—Thy mother was his ward."

"O Heaven! hearest thou this blasphemous untruth! My birth is infamous, say'st thou?—And what proof canst give to strengthen this outrageous accusation?"

"The mark upon thy right arm, as if a powerful hand had grasped the limb, and left a rough impression there. Perchance," he added in a lower tone, "the grasp may be resumed!"

Adenez stood aghast; for such a mark too sure he bore upon him. Yet, startled as he was at the appalling accuracy of information in the wretch before him, he could not admit the notion that aught superhuman accompanied this knowledge. "Wretch," he cried, "some slave hath told thee of this mark!"

"Slave! no," repeated the man, hoarsely laughing. "Ask the Templar who bore thee in his arms to Brabant's duke."

"A Templar, say'st thou? And was the Templar tall, prince-like, and noble?"

"Tall, prince-like, and noble"—was echoed back, but now it was not his guide that spoke.

"'Twas not you that spoke?" cried Adenez, turning to his guide. The man shook his head mysteriously.

"Nay then, 'tis Echo that mocks me.—Tell me more, stranger.—Nay, tell me *all*—My mother lives?"

"Lives," replied the voice that had before spoken.

He turned again to his guide. "I have no more to tell," he said, in answer to this mute appeal. "Go seek your parents; and, when they are found, come here again.—Farewell!"

CHAPTER XII.

WE must not attempt to describe the agitation into which the mind of Adenez was thrown by his interview with the sorcerer, for such he felt himself compelled to believe the stranger. He would have given the world to be allowed to vent his feelings, by wandering alone throughout the night, for he felt oppressed by a nervous difficulty of breathing, which became stifling when subjected to the confinement of the palace ; but the commands of the queen were imperative, and he was compelled to appear before her, to give her the expected account of his mission.

Had he been less absorbed by his own emotions, he might have observed the air of malicious satisfaction with which the chamberlain ushered him into the presence of his gracious mistress, who, though surrounded by her maidens, was solely occupied with Jane.

Mary, whose feelings had been wound up to the highest pitch by the protracted absence of her minstrel, almost started when he presented himself before her, while Jane put forth her smiling face as if to welcome him. He only noticed her by a motion of his hand, as if to repulse her from him, while approaching the queen he said he had something for her grace's private ear. Mary preceded him to a recess of one of the windows, while the singular agitation which both discovered, and the words that reached her attendants, though few, bespoke high interest by their import. " Son " — " King " — " Brabant's Duke " — " St. Louis " — " Escape " — and " prison."

At the termination of their conference, Mary appeared scarcely less agitated than her bard ; and on his taking leave, he was invited to repeat his visit on the following morning.

When they met they were both less agitated than on the preceding evening ; but the deepest melancholy was visible on the countenance of Adenez, and the truest sympathy was imprinted on that of Mary. The result of this conversation, was a letter despatched by the queen to her brother the Duke of Brabant. Mary then endeavoured to discover from her

young page William de Béthune, who was the Templar to whom he had introduced Adenez. But the page only knew him to be a friend of the Lady Marguerite, and could only name him by the epithet of Sir Hildebrand, by which he had inquired for him. Nothing seemed capable of soothing Adenez. The lovely Jane in vain tried her powers of fascination. He spoke plainly of the impossibility of their union. She deemed it want of affection on his part; and his declaration of inability to fulfil his engagements as a studied insult. Alas! despair was in his heart. The son of a servant of the Holy Church! of an adulterous intercourse! He seemed to himself to be an outcast from society.

In the mean time, the lady of the chamberlain sought by every means in her power to gain the confidence of the young Jane d'Assche, and to work upon her jealousy if possible, that she too might take a part in the tragedy about to be performed. The most soothing flattery was employed; and when the king's admiration of beauty was, as if by chance, the topic of conversation, it was remarked, that *her* style of person was what pleased him most particularly.

The change in the character and manners of Adenez was then adverted to. "And was the Troubadour always so sad and dreamy, as he has been since the queen's marriage?"

"O no. At least I think not. He used to be very gay at Brabant."

"And were the Princess and the bard as much together before she came to France as they are now?"

"You know they were brought up and always studied together. The queen taught Adenez to make poetry, and Adenez taught the Princess to play the harp."

"But was he so *very* devoted as he is now, when he seems to forget every body that he may gaze on the queen?—Ah, the king has eyes for other beauty!"

Jane smiled. "And when he called me beautiful, do you think he was as sincere as he seemed to be in manner as well as in look?"

"Could you but have seen his highness, when he a dozen times repeated it to me, you would not ask the question. If he could but know that the queen likes nothing but literature, and music and musical people, no doubt his eyes would be opened!"

But here their conversation was interrupted by the arrival of William, who desired Jane to go to the queen.

The extraordinary resemblance between the nun who had obtruded herself upon the Princess and him who now seemed motherless, with a mother perhaps in existence, had often recurred to Mary; and now that the nun had been again forced upon her remembrance by the strange combination of passing events, the likeness again struck upon her imagination with romantic force. The dream too which followed her extraordinary prophecy, was again thought of; and the queen could not resist the belief that this mysterious woman and Adenez were, though unknown to each other, in reality closely connected. She had no one about her who had seen the nun except Jane d'Assche; and however little she approved the change in that young lady's manner and character, the want of somebody with whom to speak, in Adenez's absence, of the circumstance which now so engrossed her attention, induced her to summon this fickle and frivolous confidant.

In reply to the Princess,—“She had,” she said, “remarked the prophetess, but had never seen any body like her! No—she was sure she had never seen any one with such large—such very large black and fiery eyes; but as to the voice,—yes, she admitted that when Adenez was out of temper (a rare occurrence), he certainly spoke something like her.”

This was very unsatisfactory to the queen. She pursued the conversation no further; but such as it was, it was reported to the grand chamberlain and his lady, and they took care to avail themselves of the opportunity to incite the foolish girl to invite the queen to visit the sorcerer, who could doubtless inform her of what she wished to know. The queen's suspicion of a resemblance between Adenez and the nun, was at first treated as the vision of a woman in love, who sees a likeness to the object of her passion in every thing; it was subsequently turned to another purpose. Mary, though superior in the cultivation of her mind to the generality of women, had in every thing which concerned the sensibilities of her sex all the weakness of the most tender among them. And it can consequently be no wonder if she, in common with the most enlightened of her time, both in rank and reputation, had a strong tendency to superstition. She acceded to the suggestions of Jane; determined to pay a visit to the sorcerer.

She invited her confidant to accompany her ; but Jane, who really intended and wished it, had yielded to the suggestions of the chamberlain and his wife, and therefore, pretending fear, declined the proposal.

As Mary did not choose to have her weakness, for such she was obliged to confess it, known to the whole court, she only commanded the attendance of her woman, with Adenez for a guide. She was much struck with the solitary and desolate appearance of the place in the midst of so populous a city, and she entered it with a cold shudder.

The sorcerer was there.

Mary, who of course did not wish to be recognised, was dressed like a citizen's wife,—in those days each class in society carried in its apparel evident marks of its station,—and when she appeared at the low door of the dwelling, the sorcerer greeted her with these inauspicious words :—“ Enter, Madam, for fate, like death, can make all equal — the beggar and the king. What would you here ? ”

“ I come,” said Mary, trying to speak with calmness, “ to inquire if I am again to see a female who once appeared to me, and who greatly interested me by her divinations ? ”

“ And who spoke of misery and death ? ”

“ Ha ! ” said the queen, “ know *you* too that ? — And who then is this female ? ”

“ Methinks there be one nearer you than I am, who might better answer that question.”

Adenez started ! “ How ! ” exclaimed Mary.

“ Lady,” replied the sorcerer, mysteriously, while the nasal drawl with which he spoke became even more grating upon the ear, “ We wait only your consent to reply to all your questions. But as there is now a counteracting power at work, incantations, spells, and calculations are necessary. Put your questions upon virgin parchment, and the reply shall be written,” he continued, lowering his voice, “ in the blood of a deadly enemy ? ”

Mary shuddered with horror, as she turned from him to Adenez, whose calmness astonished her. In reply to the sorcerer's speech, she could only look her repugnant refusal ; but Adenez exclaimed impatiently : “ And who dares to be the enemy of the queen ? ”

“ He,” replied the man, looking cautiously round ; and

speaking again in a low whisper, while he emphatically paused on each word, he uttered — “He who has dared from his birth to take the place, the riches, and risks of another, till danger approached, and then ——”

“And what then?” said Adenez, impatiently.

“And then,” continued the sorcerer, “in the hope of the better supporting his perilous career, he made a confidant of him who sought his downfall.”

This description was conclusive, though vague. Both Adenez and the queen now knew who was her enemy.

CHAPTER XIII.

No sooner had Queen Mary quitted the sorcerer’s den, than another female habited in a similar manner appeared. She bore in her hand a purse of gold; she wrapt her veil closely about her face and figure as she entered, and she looked cautiously round while she whispered to the unhallowed master, that she was a messenger from *her* who had just left him, who had commissioned her to say that she spoke but half her errand, for that she expected another and a greater service than any she had hinted at from him.

“By the black spell,” grumbled the person addressed, “she has asked but little yet. What would she?”

“Know you her who came in the semblance of a citizen’s wife?”

“If you doubt my power,” he surlily replied, “why are you here?”

“At any rate, the weight of this purse,” said his visitor, “may tell you she is somewhat more than she seemeth.”

“What would you, or she, for it matters not which, since you bring that to make the cauldron bubble?”

“Ay,” replied his guest, in a voice tremulous from some emotion badly suppressed, “then you know my errand?”

The sorcerer cast his penetrating eyes upon the speaker, and his inquiring glance had the effect of making her wrap her veil yet more closely around her, but the purse trembled in her hand. — “Speak!” he gruffly cried.

"There be those who stand in the way of her who is just gone," said the veiled female, mysteriously.

"And their removal might benefit others rather than herself," replied the sorcerer, ambiguously.

"True," said the female, after a pause. — "*Children*——"

The man smiled contemptuously, — "'Tis a drug you seek?"

The woman presented the purse.

"Speak, woman," said the wretch, imperiously, "What do you ask?"

The woman started, her voice faltered. "For a child——"

"Of eleven years of age," said the man, taking the purse. He quickly mixed two powders, which he wrapt in a paper.

The woman received the parcels; but she yet lingered, as if undecided.

"What!" said the sorcerer, "is your mission not yet complete?" He marked her eye resting on a wax figure only half formed. His instantaneously gleamed with yet fiercer brightness, while his skinny lips, parting asunder, disclosed his pearly teeth as he grinned in horrid satisfaction. "Ha!" he cried, lengthening the monosyllable with horrid emphasis, as a hoarse laugh sounded hollow from his throat, without, however, giving the slightest animation to any of his features.

"What sum?" asked the woman, in words so faintly uttered that a person less acquainted with the half-tones of those who plunge step by step into guilt would have found it difficult to comprehend.

"Why, for one so dignified, three times the value of this purse, each coin of which bears *the image* engraven on pure gold."

The woman was so thrown off her guard by her agitation, that the veil was for an instant forgotten; it fell and partially discovered a low wide forehead, and black eyebrows so strongly marked that once seen they could not be forgotten. It was the head nursery-maid of the young princes, who had been lately dismissed by the queen.

The man smiled grimly as he made this discovery, for this was not the first time he had seen her; having been led by Labrosse himself into the children's apartment, previous to the dismissal of this attendant, whose discharge had induced him to change his measures. She perceived his smile, and hastily

replaced her veil. "Be it so," she continued. "You shall have what you demand, and that directly. A kingdom," she continued, looking full at him, "is thus cheaply purchased."

The lady of the chamberlain, pretending to discover some unfavourable symptoms about the eldest of the children, was in Mary's apartments as she was retiring for the night. Her warm evening posset was brought in; the lady would hand it to her herself, and finding it, she said, not well prepared, she stirred it with the massive spoon lying on the salver on which it was presented, and invited the queen to drink it off at one draught, as it might promote the repose so likely to be disturbed by anxiety about the young prince. Mary, who in matters unconnected with her principles and feelings, was the most easily guided of human beings, followed her advice; and the suggestion of the lady was realised, by a sleep so long that it was not till the hour of dinner next day the queen was roused by her attendant, when she heard of the danger of the eldest of the princes, who was also her favourite.

Her grief and indignation, when she found herself denied admission to the apartments of the children, may be better conceived than described. Yet she was entirely unsuspecting that any imputation of crime could be urged against her. Even when she sent a box of sweetmeats, and the gift had been refused by the attendants, she could not at all understand the motives which could have caused its rejection, which were no less than pretended fears lest its contents might be poisoned.

The young Louis died; and a guard was set over the queen. Then it was that Adencz set out upon his mission to Brabant.

The queen was thus placed in a situation in which, though she might assert, it was almost impossible for her to prove her innocence. A single and helpless female in a foreign country, new to its laws and institutions, without witnesses or counsellors, and with a very imperfect knowledge of the late transactions, possessing no means of knowing the seeming proofs that her enemies might adduce against her, ignorant even of the charges they made, the queen seemed inevitably lost, for it appeared impossible to contend with the array of state villains marshalled against her.

She was in this situation when the Sire de Joinville obtained,

through the private friendship of the king, permission to visit her.

The old man wept as he approached, while he seized her outstretched hand and pressed it to his lips, and entreated her to inform him how he could serve her.

"Send to my brother, my good Joinville, for it is only he that by God's help can establish my innocence!"

"By the sainted king," exclaimed the good old man, "whose servant I was for so many years, it shall be done, even if my head fall a sacrifice to this first want of fealty to the King of France—for if it be a step that Philip does not approve, he who under an oak for so many years administered justice to his poorest subjects would not refuse it to a princess!"

"No, Sire Joinville!" replied the royal prisoner. "And, further, you must understand that every memorial has been unnoticed, and every petition disregarded which I have been enabled to forward to him."

"That," replied the historian, "is no great wonder, since your only enemies had the presenting of them. Would that his father were yet alive!" he continued. "Your wrongs then would soon be redressed."

"They would never have been inflicted," said the queen, indignantly.

"And have you asked to see the king?"

"Indeed I have solicited the permission to throw myself at his majesty's feet—and what was his reply?" she continued, vehemently. "That such a measure could not in decency be allowed; that to admit into his august presence one accused of the"—(Mary shuddered as she continued) "the death of the poor innocent—the heir to the crown—was a thing unheard of.—They insisted that I must first disprove the accusation in full council; and then my lord the king would be the first to solicit an interview."

When Joinville heard this decision, he said, that much as he desired to have every circumstance elucidated in this dark business, he yet was compelled to object to the trial. "I cannot conceal from you, madam," continued he, "that there is at court a strong party against you, while you have but few friends of any weight in the council. Then again, who will superintend the proceedings?—He who from the beginning has upon every occasion evinced his enmity against you.

Who will be your judge?—He who from the first has suffered himself to be directed by the representations of your enemies, and who has constantly refused to attend to any thing that can be urged in your defence. It behoves you, madam, therefore to demand that your brother be present.”

“My brother!” exclaimed the queen, passionately. “He who had such a justifiable pride in the poor gifts with which nature hath endowed his sister!—Is it necessary that he too should see my humiliation?” and she wept bitterly.

“His presence, madam, will encourage your friends to declare themselves, while it will intimidate your enemies. Let him and Labrosse choose each an equal number of nobles, to decide between you and the grand chamberlain. Little did the good King Louis imagine that in him whom he thus raised to be equal with the nobles of the land, he should find an enemy to his immediate successor!”

The good old man carried this proposal to the king, but it ill accorded with the views of the wily chamberlain; and he induced the king to reply, “That the wife was subject to the husband, the same as was Brabant to France, as his superior lord; and that all controversies between the king and his vassals had ever been decided in the courts of the sovereign. That this right could not now be waived, without establishing a precedent which on some future occasion could not fail to be cited to the dishonour of the king.”

This crooked policy roused the indignation of Mary, and wrung from her an expostulation, written with the dignity of a queen and the spirit of an innocent and injured woman. It ran thus:—

“Sire, and my Lord and Husband,

“If I do not weep, it is that the shame and anger at being thus dishonoured burn up the source of tears, and stifle all softer feelings. Let me then recall to your Highness, that when I left Brabant I relinquished without hesitation the guardianship of those whom nature had made to love me, content with the protection and trusting in the affection of your Highness; and if I am to be bereft of that which I had trusted would be the guerdon of my honour and happiness, I have at least the right to ask that my brother may behold my trial, and know the extent of my misery. The crown and comfort of my life, your Highness’s favour, I feel to be gone;

yet know not how it went. But if I be condemned upon surmises, I do tell you 'tis rigour and not justice. What I ask is, therefore, that the chamberlain be put in accusation, as I have been. Let him too be thrown into prison. — Let him be also deprived of all communion with his friends. — Let mine be allowed access to your Highness, and I am ready to waive all my rights as a queen, and meet him in a public court — to abide by the sentence of my lord and husband."

All that Philip had heard from Jane of the mysterious Beguine had excited his interest; and embarrassed by the arguments of the queen's friends and the importunities of the grand chamberlain, he resolved, through the medium of the Beguine, to seek her interpretation of the mystery which seemed to envelope the death of his son.

He therefore declared that he could not receive Mary till her innocence had been proved. But that in order to show his extreme desire that justice might be done to both parties, he would appoint a deputation to wait upon the Beguine, whose prescience had been so clearly manifested to the queen.

Labrosse still retained influence enough to have the Bishop of Evereux appointed to this mission; and he was accompanied by an abbé of mean capacity, a creature suited to do the basest bidding of a vile employer.

CHAPTER XIV.

It was on one of those evenings of early autumn so beautiful in the westerly parts of Europe, that a traveller passed through the forest of Soignies on his way to Brussels, which was then embosomed within its shades.

He was dressed in the green mantle so universally worn by the troubadours of that age; a hood of the same colour and material covered his head and concealed his features, together with the beautiful golden hair which fell in glossy ringlets on his shoulders.

The sun was setting, and its beams fell full upon the city, and showed tower and turret in picturesque varieties of aspect, as the traveller, having passed the gate, crossed the wooden

bridge to penetrate the island, in his way to the Borgval, where the ducal palace was then situated.

The city itself was calm, and the only sounds that interrupted the silence were sounds that communicated pleasurable emotions. The loudest and most sonorous was that of the vesper bells, the call of which was answered by many a veiled figure, bearing in her hand "the rosary by sainted fathers blest;" while groups of children, earnest in their evening sports, barred up the narrow street.

But the traveller heeded neither the turret nor tower, whether it rose bright in the setting sunbeam, or reposed in shadow,—nor did he hearken to the call of the church bell to prayer, though its deep and sonorous note would, at another time, have sunk deep into the minstrel's mind; the sports of the children were equally powerless to attract his attention, though they sometimes impeded his progress. Solely intent on urging forward his tired steed, he looked neither to the right nor to the left, till he alighted at the gate of the palace.

"Sir Adenez!" exclaimed the duke, as the stranger was ushered into the apartment where he was eating his late supper, for it was nearer eight than seven o'clock.

"Pardon, sire!" said the stranger, approaching and dropping on one knee, while the hood fell from his head and discovered the ingenuous countenance of the page William. "Pardon, if a most pressing occasion hath driven me to break through formal observances, and made me in a forced disguise appear to be in momentary forgetfulness of due respect."

"William!" cried the duke,— "What brings you here?"

"Most gracious liege," replied the page, "the most unwelcome duty that could bring a servant to the feet of his most honoured master. The queen to justify my mission bid me deliver this token, the golden violet, which your Highness will at once recognise as hers."

The duke took the violet, gazed on it intently; then seeing the agitated countenance of the page, dismissed attendants, and commanded him to speak.

"Would that this tongue had been for ever silent ere it had been forced to tell the saddest tidings that ever reached the ear of a brother jealous of his sister's honour, peace, and happiness;"—

"How! A sister, said you? The queen!" And the duke's voice faltered.

"Most noble duke—the joy and happiness that wantedon wildly in the streets, and seemed to fill each patriot heart in France, when the glowing feeling excited by the matchless grace and talent of my royal mistress had turned to cool indifference or causeless jealousy ——"

"O fickle nation! And the king?" exclaimed the duke.

"The king, I yet believe, would have fondly loved her; for it is not in human nature to resist the charms concentrated in her person and her mind. But her talents were too transcendent; her excellence created such an empire over his mind, that Labrosse lost all his influence."

"His barber favourite!" said the duke, contemptuously.

"The same, my liege. Among the virtuous enjoyments of the queen, she felt her chief delight in the society of the young princes; and, sooth to say, they amply requited her care in duteous love and pleased obedience. Their head attendant was not pleasing to my noble mistress; she was dismissed; but such was the unsuspecting dignity of the gracious queen, that she made Labrosse name one to fill her place. Soon after this the eldest prince fell ill. The queen was refused admission to his chamber."

"But Philip?" said the duke, impatiently; "knew he of this exclusion?"

"My liege, the facts are so strange, the truth so darkly shaded round by mystery, that I am quite unable to fathom it. They say that the graces of the Lady Jane have won upon the king, and that her easy temper has been practised on to inflame his jealousy and utterly deceive him."

"Jane!" said the duke, in an accent of surprise.

"The queen," continued the page, "felt for the sick child more than for her own indignities; and sent him a box of sweetmeats. The box was returned—the child was not allowed to accept it!"

"By St. Joseph," said the duke, rising in a rage, "that is too bad!—Some of them shall rue this!"

"If this so move you, my gracious prince," said the page, "how will you hear the end of this incredible tale?—The young prince died!"

The duke, who had hitherto paced the room in much agita-

tion, now stopped ; and so intense was the heed he gave to the page's communication, that he scarcely drew his breath lest he should lose a word.

The page continued : — " Soon after his death the body was covered with livid spots ; this created suspicion. Surgeons were called to examine the corpse ; the same symptoms of foul play appeared internally, — no doubt existed but that the prince was poisoned ! " — The page here covered his face with his hands, and vainly strove to conceal the tears that trickled from his eyes.

" Continue ! " said the duke, furiously, — then, in a softer tone, " In pity finish this perfidious tale."

" O sire ! for words to communicate the truth you needs must know, but which my tongue refuses to utter — "

" They dare not ! " said the duke, after a pause, in tones of concentrated and deep emotion, " They dare not accuse *her* of the crime ! "

" And whom has your noble sister there to screen her from their outrages ? — whom, save Adenez the minstrel, and me a feeble page ! — Her kindness to these princes had been so uniform, that they all doated on her very name ; — her enemies, therefore, were forced to recur to charges of sorcery, and boldly declared that she had, by means of magical aid, destroyed the boys, and practised on the life of the king. Unhappily, she did once visit an unholy practiser of forbidden rites — "

" Go on, — go on ! " said the duke, in a tone of suppressed anguish. — " Why did she not send to me at once ? "

" O, my liege ! Recall to your gracious thoughts the mind — the high, the noble spirit of the princess. She long wept her trials in secrecy ; her bearing, though grave, was dignified ; her countenance, though sadly pale, was calm ; her dimmed eye, her colourless lips, alone indicated her sufferings. — But when the charges of her enemies were aimed at even her life — "

" Her life ? The life of my sister ? " exclaimed the duke, clenching his fist.

" Then, my gracious lord, Adenez left Paris to inform you of these proceedings. He was arrested by an order signed by the king, who, urged by what influence or what motive I know not, declared he would leave the cause to the prophethess

of Nivelles. Your grace remembers her sudden apparition at the palace?"

"But indistinct and vaguely did the rumour of such an event reach my ears," replied the duke. "But did King Philip know of it?"

"The Lady Jane knew of it, and saw her, and probably told him the whole affair."

"But you, William; why are you thus disguised?" asked the duke.

The page hung his head. Quick mantling blushes rapidly succeeded each other in rapid succession upon his ingenuous countenance. "Please your highness, my—the Count of Flanders loves not Adenez, and I feared he might oppose my journey. Besides, your highness knows 'tis by far the safest travelling dress. The violet——"

"What of the bauble?" asked the duke.

"The queen, my royal mistress, bid me keep and wear it," continued the page. "'And be it,' she said, 'down to after times the signal of constant attachment and unshaken fidelity.'"

On these words, the badge was returned to him by the duke, who then swore, with impetuous sternness, that before daylight on the following morning he would be on his road to Paris.

The page rejoined him at the appointed time. He found him attended by some of the boldest knights of his suite, among whom rode a Templar, whose dignified stature and lofty bearing instantly recalled to the apparent minstrel his old friend, Sir Hildebrand.

CHAPTER XV.

As it was in the forest of Soignies, and close to Nivelles, that the Count of Flanders had seen the mysterious female, it was resolved to proceed to that town in order to obtain the necessary information as to her residence.

Nivelles was at that time celebrated for a very extensive Beguinage, with little else to recommend it to the attention of strangers. It was situate at the bottom of a valley in the

bosom of the forest, but it did not then possess the extensive trade which has since brought so much wealth within its walls and luxury into the dwellings of its inhabitants.

On making the necessary inquiries, it was found that the person sought for did not belong to this community, though she was frequently in the neighbourhood of the town, wandering up and down like a troubled spirit. The nun, to whom the abbé addressed himself, either could not or would not say more.

The bishop then sent for the principal of the order. She entered the room where the bishop was sitting, evidently much flattered with the honour done her, but seemed frightened when the bishop pushed his inquiries respecting the prophetess. She said that the Beguine had foretold very strange things, but that when people went to put questions to her, she would seldom answer them. That she had no settled habitation; but that there was a cave, in the side of a hill, in the wood where she had been lately seen. The Beguine repeated this in a low voice; and, while she spoke, her eyes wandered unquietly round her, as if in fear of finding the object there of whom she had dared to speak.

The bishop thought his dignity would be compromised by going to seek the Beguine; he therefore sent the abbé upon this mission. As the abbé walked slowly into the forest, pondering upon the difficulties of his search, he found the narrow pathway, overshadowed as it was with thick forest trees, suddenly darkened to his view. He looked up, and trembled, and turned pale; why, he scarcely knew; for that it was the object of whom he was in search who now stood before him, he could not doubt.

It was the tall figure of the Beguine, thin to emaciation, with the pale ghastly countenance, and the black eyes dazzling in the spirit of prophecy. She looked towards him with an expression in which scorn and grief were blended. "Go," she cried, "and tell him that my heart seeth the wickedness of the unjust; that there is no fear of God before his eyes. For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, till his abominable sin be found out. There are they fallen, all that work wickedness, they are cast down, and shall not be able to stand."

She then left him. He attempted to follow her, but she

made a motion with her hand for him to stop : and he returned to the bishop to render an account of his interview.

The bishop could not conceal his vexation at the failure of the abbé. He took a guide to the cave that had been described to him, and he there found the object which had so appalled his messenger. She was sitting in a cell formed of reeds, wood, and rushes, which covered the entrance to the cave. She appeared entirely absorbed in deep reflection.

As soon as she perceived the bishop and his attendants, she retired to the interior of the cave, nor could she be persuaded to leave it. He therefore followed her there, and remained nearly an hour ; and when he returned, the abbé remarked that he wore an air of greater humility ; and perhaps some disappointment was mingled with the softened tones of his voice, as he gave orders for their immediate departure.

Meantime the king became very impatient for the return of the deputation. And when the bishop's name was announced, he gave orders for his immediate admission.

After the usual compliments, the king kept silence for some time. His countenance was very pale, and the most marked agitation was visible upon his features. At length, finding the bishop did not speak, " What do you bring me ? " he said.

" Please, your grace," answered the bishop, " I have been able to draw nothing from her, except under the seal of confession."

" How ! " said the king, frowning ; " did I send you to confess her ? " More he would have said, but at that moment a messenger introduced a herald, who announced in due form the arrival of the Duke of Brabant, his master, and demanded, on his part, in peremptory terms, permission to see his sister.

When admitted to that sister, whom only two years before he had brought so pompously to the arms of her spouse, rejoicing the hearts of multitudes, welcomed by thousands, at whose approach every mouth wore a smile and every eye glanced gladness, and who now alone, in a damp, deserted cell, abandoned by the world and forgotten by those who did not cover her remembrance with reproaches, the warrior wept. He pressed her to his heart, then held her at a distance from him to view the alteration that tears and suffering had made on her countenance.

He then conversed long and amply on her present confine-

ment and its cause, and was indignant when he learnt that no notice of what she had been accused had been delivered to her. That all she knew was vaguely and from common report.

He had little difficulty in obtaining permission for her removal to her own apartments. He next demanded an audience of the king, when, after a long conversation, he threw down his gauntlet, and challenged all who should accuse his sister to meet him in single combat.

No one answered to this appeal. Perhaps the friends of Labrosse feared the punishment which was decreed to those who were overcome. It was in truth frightful.

St. Louis, indignant at the frequency of these single combats, had established very rigorous laws in the hope of suppressing them. The combatants were compelled in the first place to suffer a very severe interrogatory, in the hope of eliciting the truth from one or the other; each was obliged to seal his declaration by an oath, and to listen to a solemn exhortation of the danger to the soul of the guilty. The funeral service was recited over them, as if there was no hope that either could quit the contest alive; and they were warned that the vanquished would be dragged out of the lists by the feet, and then fastened to a gibbet. In short, in these judicial contests, every means were employed to induce one of the parties to desist.

If both knights persisted in desiring battle, the judges of the camp gave the signal, after again warning the combatants that the beaten would, whether dying or dead, be hanged.

Those who let themselves out for these "wagers of battle" were punished, in case of failure, equally with those who hired them.

The duke was embarrassed and indignant that his challenge to combat produced no result, and that no expedient could be thought of to re-establish his sister in the king's opinion.

The crafty chamberlain was well aware that having no knight to answer the Duke of Brabant's wager of battle, the queen was, in the eye of the law, cleared from the charges brought against her. If the king yet hesitated, he knew that it was upon other charges with which he had abused his ear, and he flattered himself that he had now collected sufficient circumstantial evidence to cause her, upon a new accusation,

to be condemned, if not to death, at least to perpetual confinement in a cloister.

He had hitherto succeeded in neutralising the hatred which the "Black Lady" had vowed against him, as having aided the escape of the victim of her vengeance; for he was fully aware that as soon as he had openly become the queen's accuser, the Count of Flanders would have ranged himself as her defender, could he have hoped by criminating Labrosse to induce the king to give him up to Marguerite's demands. He had, by avowing himself to be the son of Labrosse, and not of Ada, as he had declared to the king, while he pointed out Adenez as that son, turned his vengeance from himself to another victim. But it was far from his intention, by giving up Adenez into the hands of the count, to gratify Marguerite's vengeance, and to endanger the loss of the king's protection, which he knew was extended to the son of Ada and Bouchard, (in conformity to a vow which his father the king had rigorously exacted), rather than to himself. When, therefore, Adenez was sent by the queen on the mission to her brother, it was necessary to interrupt a journey during which it would be so easy for Guy to possess himself of his person. He therefore persuaded the king to sign with his own hand an order to commit the bard to prison, upon charges which we shall hasten to explain. The friends of the queen, who were more than ever anxious for the arrival of the Duke of Brabant, consented, upon the earnest entreaty of the page, William, to let him take the mission intended for Adenez, and in order to conceal his plans from his father, he went disguised as a minstrel; and as his height was much the same as that of Adenez, he borrowed one of his dresses, and in this disguise reached Brussels.

It will be remembered that the head nursery-maid had been removed from the prince's apartments previous to his death. She was closely confined in prison, without knowing with what offence she was charged; but, as soon as the Duke had thrown down his gauntlet to challenge the accusers of his sister, the grand chamberlain, to excuse his not accepting by his deputy this gage of defiance, taxed Mary, in conjunction with the head nursery-maid and her Troubadour, Adenez Lekoi, of sorcery and magic, which accusations being proved, would of course exonerate him from the necessity of accepting the challenge.

He had caused the sorcerer, his wife, and servant to be arrested, and a day was fixed for the trial. The crime of which Mary was charged, was that of practising charms to affect the life of the king. A figure in wax was produced, said to have been intended as a resemblance of Philip. It was pierced to the heart with a needle, mutilated and bloody; and it was supposed that when their incantations were fully accomplished, the needle which had pierced the heart of his effigy would be as a dagger in the heart of the king; that the wound would be mortal, and the victim would die! Before the day of trial the sorcerer was found dead in his prison, accused by his enemies of having hanged himself; but there was more appearance of his having been strangled. This pretended suicide was construed into a proof of his guilt; and the king was prayed to fix a day for his judgment, but instead of granting this request, the superstitious and wavering monarch insisted upon employing another deputation to the Beguine.

It may appear strange that the wily chamberlain, whose influence over the mind of the king must have been perceived, should suffer deputation after deputation to be sent to a subject of the Duke of Brabant, for such the Beguine appeared to be; but he had in the last mission perceived that the Beguine really believed herself to be his mother, and trusting to this circumstance, he had no doubt of her declaration of his innocence, which, taking into consideration the queen's belief in the truth of her prophetic mission, he hoped would go far to fix on Philip's wavering mind a confirmation of his innocence; and he trusted by this means to send Mary back to Brabant, and to decide Adenez's destiny at once.

When the duke came to Brussels, he brought a Templar in his train, who was now named as principal of the mission. Though Labrosse was annoyed and somewhat uneasy at this unexpected nomination, yet he did not altogether despair. He had pondered over the prophecy to which the queen had lent her ear previous to her coming to Paris, and which Jane had repeated to him, and found in it every motive for consolation. A tragical termination was pointed out, death it was declared would attend her at Paris:—that prophecy must then point to the queen or to Adenez, for the queen knew not him when she listened to it.

The deputation proceeded as rapidly as possible towards the

forest of Soignies, and advanced to the cave. At the sound of their horses' feet, the Beguine approached the door of her cell. She was very pale, and her large and wandering eye had lost its fire; her head too, instead of being turned towards heaven, as if to seek its high behests, that she might declare them, now fell dejectedly on her breast, while with a low and broken voice entirely divested of that fitful enthusiasm which had seemed to vouch the truth of her prophecies, she repeated: — "I am weary of my groaning, every night I wash my bed, and water my couch with tears."

Here she crossed her arms upon her breast, and seemed to forget that any stranger was present.

The Templar made a signal for his suite to retire, but retained one among them near to him. "Woman!" at length, he said, in an authoritative voice, "thou, who hast devoted thyself to fasting and prayer to make atonement for the sins of thy youth, in the face of thy Sovereign Judge, when the past equally with the future is opened to thy enlightened vision, why hast thou abstained from declaring the innocence of her who is falsely accused, and the guilt of him who destroyed the heir of the French crown?"

She lifted up her head as the Templar spoke. His words no longer seemed to penetrate and shake her soul, as the remonstrance or the reproach of mortal man, but rather to fall upon her ears as an admonition from Heaven; and she cast her eyes upwards, while both hands were raised as if to give effect to the inspiration of her spirit. "The statutes of the Lord are right and penetrate the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure and giveth light unto the eyes."

These words seemed the outpouring of her soul, not the mere rhapsody of an enthusiast, but as if communing with her own heart, she sought inspiration from a higher source. Then turning towards the Templar, she continued: — "Say to the king, Upon his right hand did stand the queen, in a vesture of gold, wrought about with divers colours. But not more glorious her vesture than the heart they covered; nor more pure the molten gold of her crown than was her mind from the guilt, than was her spirit from the imagination, of the crime imputed to her. Let her therefore again stand before the Lord's anointed. With joy and gladness let her be brought into the palace of the king. And tell the queen ——" But

here the fire of her eye was quenched, and its spirit became darkened, her arms sunk powerless by her side, and she dropped exhausted upon the bank beside her.

"Ada!" said the Templar, when he saw her slowly recovering.

"Who calls her that once answered to that loved name?" said the Beguine.

"Ada!" again said the Templar, unclosing his visor and taking off his helmet. "Look upon me. Do you know me?"

"Know thee!" she cried, as she lifted her eyes to his countenance, and slowly perused his features. Long and fixedly did she regard him. Once she drew her hand across her eyes, as if to dissipate a mist or cloud that obscured her vision. Then speaking slowly and low, as if trying to collect remembrances that flitted across her memory: "Before my mind was darkened by guilt, or the kindness of my nature had become obscured by that fierce and guilty passion which alike trampled upon every duty and every tender feeling, such a figure used to smile upon me, and it afterwards appeared to me in my dreams, with an expression of fierce resentment; later it took a gentler aspect, and a look of grief and pity quenched the terror of that burning frown,—who then art thou?"

"Ada! I knew the noble Baldwin.—The sad tale I heard told of the sufferings of thy mother awakened in my bosom an interest in thy fate.—How I loved thee," here his voice faltered,—“ask the Lady Marguerite, for to her were all my hopes confided. I will not dwell upon my sufferings, when deserting your convent you proved too surely 'twas an earthly, not a heavenly love which rendered you insensible to my vows. I have never known another love!” Then, in a voice sinking almost to a whisper, he said to her, as he drew nearer, “Where is Bouchard?”

She half shrieked, “I am ignorant! When the Unknown gave me to see the light of day, and to wander in blessed freedom beneath the azure canopy of heaven, I vowed never to let those eyes look upon him again. Never to speak to him, and if possible never to bear him in my thoughts. And I then also vowed never to raise my guilty voice without blending in my orisons the name of her I had so greatly injured. God is my witness how I have kept the vow.”

"And where," continued the Templar, "is your son?" The Beguine was silent for a minute, then she replied ambiguously, "I wrote to St. Louis, and intrusted my child to Labrosse to present to the king. They tell me the king's chamberlain is that boy."

"And does your heart acknowledge him?" said the Templar.

She replied by throwing herself on her knees and repeating from the Psalms, "Save me, and deliver me from the hand of strangers, whose mouth talketh of vanity, and whose right hand is a right hand of iniquity."

When she had finished her prayer, the Templar continued. "Many years I was away in the Holy Land. When I returned, my first inquiry was, Where is Ada? Alas! she had fled the saintly vocation for which I had designed her. She had sought the protection of her guardian, a servant of the church. She had fallen into the hand of a much injured woman. A child was born to her. The child of this unholy connexion, which was about to be delivered to the revengeful enemy, I took from Labrosse."

"You, *you!*" cried Ada, raising her head from her hands, which had hitherto concealed her features.

Without heeding her interruption, he proceeded: "I sought the hermits of St. Augustin, and there found Bouchard d'Avesnes so long believed to be dead. I told him of your situation. I extorted an oath from him never to make himself known to you. His acquaintance with the localities of the place enabled him, with the aid of his son, to free you."

"And my son?" demanded Ada.

"I took the boy from the contemptible agent of her who sought his destruction, and conveyed him to the court or Brabant."

"O Heaven!" cried the young stranger deeply moved, and leaning forward as if to catch every syllable that fell from the Templar's tongue. The Templar, unheeding the interruption, continued, "I delivered the boy to Brabant's duke, strictly charging him to rear the infant in the service of that God whose laws his parents had so dreadfully outraged. I acknowledged his royal descent, but spoke not of you, nor of the deacon, but I called the boy Adenez (born of Ada)." The cloak

in which the stranger was wrapp'd fell from his face. In a moment he was at the feet of the Beguine.

"Mother! Oh! my mother! bless thy son, thy Adenez!"

"Son! *My* son!" shrieked Ada, embracing him with tenderness. "And art thou indeed my son?—Oh! in my dreams," she continued, "often hast thou stood before me, wearing just this noble form. But though I wept and wearied Heaven with my prayers, though I wandered over Hainault, through Flanders, though I sought thee in Holland, and traversed every corner of Brabant, I could not find thee. For," she continued, lowering her voice, "the Curse of the Black Lady darkened my spirit." For some moments she looked upon her son in silence, giving way to the delight of those emotions of parental tenderness which have all the force of passion without their guilt. But suddenly her eye assumed the supernatural brightness which shone there when the spirit of prophecy was upon her, and her finger was raised to Heaven. Then starting up to her full height while her frame trembled with the excess of agitation, she screamed, "My son! conceal thyself, thy enemies are here!"—She, with almost supernatural force, dragged him into the cave, and implored him as he valued her blessing to rest there.

The sound of horses' feet were heard in the distance. It was an armed party which approached surrounding a litter, closely covered. At their head was a lady attended by a knight in black armour, who rode proudly by her side. Behind was a troubadour strictly guarded, his face was muffled in his cloak, and he seemed lost in the melancholy nature of his reflections. The Templar, as soon as he had viewed the party, rode to seek his suite, which the approach of a tempest, that had long growled at a distance and now burst over their heads, had dispersed in search of shelter.

When he again returned, the Beguine was at the door of the cave, as if to guard its entrance; "the Black Lady" was close to her. While a smile of horrid delight animated her dark and sunken features, the minstrel was cowering beneath the sword of Guy de Dampierre, and an aged pilgrim was sitting upright in the litter.

"Thus falls the curse of Marguerite upon her enemies," said the lady, "thus, though late, does she signalise her revenge."

"Stop, Sir Knight!" said the hermit, with the low and laboured accents of extreme age; "stop!" slowly muttered the ancient pilgrim, "that is not my son." Whether this exhortation was unheard or unregarded, it matters not—but the sword was still upraised, when the Templar rushing forward, exclaimed, "Cease, Sir Knight, it is *your* son!"—He was too late. The boy staggered beneath a wound aimed from his own father's weapon. The mantle which was muffled round his face, fell from his arm, and discovered William de Béthune. "My father!" said he, in faltering accents.

"My son!" shrieked the Count of Flanders in the high piercing tones of despair. These words called together two, who had not met for years. The Beguine and the "Black Lady," losing all remembrance of past events in the horrid sight now before them, stood over the dying page, while the warriors on either side, formed a circle round them.

"Oh!" cried the Beguine, throwing herself upon her knees at the head of the page, "and is this the end of all my prayers, penances, and watchings? I have foreseen this horrible sight," she continued turning to the Templar, "and I have struggled and prayed that it might pass away, but it would not be. The curse was registered in heaven. My eyes *have* become dim. My heart *is* become hardened. How I have laboured, wearying Heaven with my prayers to turn from me the hatred of her I dare not look upon. You well know, the death of this boy must avert every hope of pardon. O yes! the weight of the curse is upon me. Have I, till now, ceased to tremble at every motion? Has not the rustling fall of a leaf been sufficient to make me flee? And now my enemy, she is here, and I wot not of it. And oh, I am going to have my portion with Judas, the betrayer of the Lord, in the land of everlasting darkness and death, if she pardon me not." Then turning towards Marguerite, "O pardon, pardon!" she cried, "Oh forgive, as thou wouldst be forgiven!

"Oh God! Pardon! Oh Holy Mary! intercede for me!" said the Beguine, casting her eyes to heaven. "The Black Lady" likewise threw her looks upwards, but they were not that of a contrite heart. All the malignity of hell seemed centered there, as she uttered curses long, and loud, and too fearful to repeat.

The Templar watched the countenance of Ada, he saw her

hour was come. He hastened into the cave to free Adenez from his confinement. When he returned with Adenez, the page had already breathed his last. "Tell the queen I have been faithful unto death. I feared lest the malediction of my father should force me to betray—and therefore—I die! ——"

Just as Adenez reached his mother, a flash of lightning struck quite across the awe-struck group. Quick and vivid as it was, it displayed to all, as it appeared to play across the features of the dying nun, the glorious sign of our redemption.

She saw it too. A look of wonder, gratitude, and joy, lighted once more her dying features, the Templar and Adenez both sank on their knees in mute adoration, with their heads bowed to the ground. The same flash, even while she was exulting in the dying agonies of the penitent Ada, closed the eyes of the Countess Marguerite in everlasting night. She was struck with blindness.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE Templar is on his way to Paris. Arrived there, all the peers of the crown are cited in council, to hear the report of his commission.

He brings with him papers from that aged pilgrim, who had been borne to the wood in the Countess Marguerite's litter—they were letters from Bouchard d'Avesnes. The name of that pilgrim was for the king's ear alone, it was sufficient that he knew the secret passages of that chateau. From a conversation he there overheard between the Lady Marguerite and her son, he was enabled to unravel the mysteries of Labrosse's dark conspiracy against the fame, and even the life, of the queen.

The king shuddered, turned pale, crossed himself, and cast his eyes to heaven, in silent gratitude that he had escaped the snare.

The Templar proceeded to relate the Beguine's exhortation. It was so full, clear, and explicit, that the king wept with joy. The queen's innocence was declared by acclamation. In presence of the council, the king summoned Madame Labrosse and Jane d'Assche before him. He insisted that they should

take his two surviving boys to the presence of the queen, that Madame Labrosse and Jane on their knees should entreat her forgiveness of their conduct, and that they should make the children in the same attitude entreat her pardon for his unjust suspicions, and solicit her again to take them under her care.

They proceeded to the queen's apartment, in company with the Duke of Brabant her brother. The ladies performed their part of the ceremony, but the children would not be restrained to enact the scene prepared for them. The queen could only embrace them again, and bedew them with her tears. But there was one witness to her emotion, who felt that every one of her tears carried a dagger to his heart. The king had time to view the alteration that sorrow had made in her beautiful countenance, though its expression again spoke of joyful emotion. She made an effort to rise as she perceived him—her feelings overpowered her—he fell at her feet. The monarch himself conducted her from her prison. In the evening she was habited once more in splendid regal robes, and attended to the Hall of Ceremony. There, seated on a throne by the side of the king, her brother close to her, and the Templar just behind, the company in groups discussed the momentous circumstance of her imprisonment. She, surrounded by Joinville, Marigni, and her children, listened to the narrative of the Templar. Then only was she informed of the fate of her faithful page, who, fearing to encounter his father, or his father's satellites, assumed Adenez's garb, for in those days the character of a troubadour was sacred. Instead of accompanying the duke back to Paris, he believed he would better fulfil his royal mistress's wishes in seeking the Beguine. A part of his route lay on the borders of Hainault, and there his father's squire met him and made him prisoner. Carried to the castle, in mistake for the minstrel, he was kept in close and solitary confinement; nor was he taken from his dungeon till he was brought out to be sacrificed an innocent victim to the vengeance of the Countess.

The pilgrim of St. Augustine appears to have been secured on the journey. He was placed in the litter of the Lady Marguerite. Whether he was known, or for what fate he was reserved, was never ascertained. He died immediately after having made his deposition.

Thus ends my legend ; but history details the following particulars. The queen enjoyed the entire confidence of the king during his life. He left her a widow, when his son Philip le Bel who succeeded him was only seventeen. She survived many years, cherished by the king and his brother, as their own mother, and admired by every body.

The king and the duke probably considered the Count of Flanders sufficiently punished by the loss of his son, but in the following reign, we find him pursued and imprisoned by Philip le Bel for many years ; and he had but just been released from captivity when he died at the age of eighty.

The villain Labrosse met the reward of his infamy, and perished on a gibbet.

A little chapel was built over the spot where the Beguine died, dedicated to the " Holy Cross " by Adenez, who entered a religious community. The " Black Lady " survived the loss of her sight about a year. The legend describes her as impenitent to the last. She lamented not the loss of her grandchild, but that the sword of her son had not struck Adenez ! And the last distinguishable words which fell from her lips were those of the dreadful malediction, which is still repeated in the traditions of Hainault as " The Curse of the Black Lady."

THE THREE FORETELLINGS.

A LEGEND OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

IN the whole of the wide districts through which the Rhine winds its way, from the romantic falls of Schaffhausen to the marshy plains of Holland, there was not a finer castle or a lovelier spot than Great Felsberg and its domains; nor does the ample range of feudal traditions afford an instance more striking than the fate of Karl Von Kreukenthall, the lord of those possessions.

This chieftain flourished and died about the latter part of the fourteenth century; but he flourished not like a fine flower of chivalry, throwing beauty and perfume on a desert age, nor did he die the inspiring death of heroism, on the green and blood-stained sward, the flourish of trumpets and the clashing of blades for the wild music of his requiem. His life was ignoble and his death obscure. Nevertheless, the extraordinary circumstance which governed both the course and the termination of his career, entitles him to a niche in that gallery of portraits, which is furnished from the abounding legends of the Rhine.

Count Karl had the double misfortune of losing his father while he was yet young, and of coming into the full possession of his power at a time of temporary peace, when neither the emperor nor his feudatories had any quarrel in hand, which could give honourable employment to the young scions of chivalry. This was indeed unlucky for our feudal hero; for had the crimson path of war invited his steps, he had, at the worst, met a soldier's fate, and closed a career worthy of his race and name, instead of running a base course, whose end was in keeping with its commencement.

No sooner was the old count laid in the family vault, and the decencies of filial regret performed, than Karl gave a loose to the most boundless dissipation, prodigality, and extravagance.

From morn till night, and often from night till morn, the woods of his domains and the halls of his castle resounded with the boisterous noise of idle sports, and the revolting outbursts of debauchery. Great Felsburg became the resort of all that was worthless among the youth of the district, and it was shunned by the virtuous, as though a moral plague spot had marked it with infection.

The sameness of this dishonouring career, rather than its disgrace, at last turned Count Karl's desires into another channel. Having in the course of a few years exhausted all the varieties of low enjoyment, nearly drained his well-filled cellars, and almost worn out the patience and the means of his vassals, he found it impossible to replenish his coffers without intolerable exactions; and disgusted with all around him, because dissatisfied with himself, he resolved to seek in travel some new excitement for his palled appetite, or at least an escape from self-reproach and the rising murmurs of those whom he oppressed.

He accordingly proposed to two of his constant companions, and who, in the usual parlance of dissipation, he called his friends, to accompany him in his proposed ramble of some months,—in what direction he cared not. The others readily consented. Few preparations were required. A very scanty supply of dress sufficed, for they were all circumstanced alike, and had none of them a surplus of money; and the frolicsome spirit of adventure combining with their necessities, induced them to lay aside both the titles and appearance of nobility, and to pursue their travels in the guise of middle life, if such a gradation may be stated to have existed at a period when there was scarce a class, as now, between the noble and plebeian. The three adventurers had in fact a dubious and mysterious air of half-and-half gentility — such as it then was — and their efforts to act the part they had assumed, sat ill on them. It is easier at any time to ape and caricature the airs of quality than to put on the simplicity of low life. The haughty and self-sufficient consciousness of these feudal lords of the fourteenth century was at every moment oozing out, through the forced assumption of manners in which they attempted to disguise themselves.

Ludwig of Steinbach and Ulric Von Linz were the two companions of Count Karl. The three friends had few dis-

tinctive points of character by which they might be separately marked. They were in fact all three, in more or less degrees, wild, reckless, and dissolute; rushing on from freak to freak and folly to folly, like so many untamed animals, without restraint beyond the necessity of their circumstances, or guide, except the wilfulness of their passions. The only plan of conduct, if plan it might be called, on which they set out, was one of intemperate riot. To follow the course of chance, to mock and laugh at every thing like order, to stop at nothing in the way of adventure, to pay no respect to place or person, to despise all moral, and give a free run to all immoral suggestions, was the sum of the tactics which were to direct their roving campaign. And so resolving, away they started, one fine autumnal morning, when the sun was peering over the hills and lighting up the vineyards and woods with a thousand varied tints, every leaf of the brown and yellow foliage looking like so many plates of burnished gold.

But the charms of scenery had no attraction for the libertines, who rose from their night's debauch with no feelings that could be influenced by the natural beauties through which they wound their way to the river-side. As they reached the margin of the stream a boat came gliding down the current laden with such stores as the rude commerce of the time sent from the German states to the Low Countries. Count Karl and his companions hailed it as it neared the place where they stood. They soon concluded a bargain for their passage to the end of the voyage, they being indifferent as to its extent or termination. The oars were soon again in motion. The sails filled with the breeze. The old towers of Felsberg quickly disappeared, as a new turn in the river swept the little vessel round the base of a huge granite rock; and in due course of time, without much opportunity being afforded for the indulgence of their coarse humour, the three adventurers were landed on one of the quays of the city of Rotterdam.

The legend does not record the various feats of libertine excess they there indulged in. The next scene in which it introduces the friends is on board one of those small passage-boats called *trackschuyts* which plied then, as they do now, on the canal between the towns of Rotterdam and Delft. And in a country where a few centuries have so little changed the appearance of things, however they have altered the character of

the people, we may imagine the primitive looking company, their air, their manners, and costume, among which the three lively libertines were thus thrown. There were no doubt many excitements for ridicule, and the young men did not fail to give vent to their turn for such satire as was suited to their tastes.

Among the passengers there was one object peculiarly marked out for mockery. This was an old woman, *so* old, so ugly, and so ill-tempered that the temptation to torment her was irresistible. Count Karl and his companions soon pitched on her as their especial prey; and they quickly began to assail her in every possible method that could ruffle and agitate, insult and annoy her.

The old woman bore these attacks ill. She retorted with a spiteful and venomous expression of countenance, that seemed to exceed even the reasonable amount of malice which her provocation might be expected to excite. The young men were well pleased at the success of their attacks. They persisted in and increased them; till at length their victim was roused to a pitch of almost frightful rage.

"Bad, base, and bold as ye are," screamed she, in a voice hoarse with passion, "beware lest ye go too far! Ye urge me beyond bearing. Another step, and ye plunge over the precipice! Desist, nor force me to utter the ban against ye! let my lips close without denouncing your doom!"

There was something very serious and very appalling in the words and in the looks of the old woman. The people who formed the remainder of the company, and the man who guided the boat, showed symptoms of terror. They seemed to know more of the old woman than they had before chosen to tell. But they now, one and all, implored Count Karl and his comrades to desist, nor urge her to further speech. A boisterous laugh, a simultaneous renewal of gibes and jeers, and a chorus of defiance, was the only answer vouchsafed by the reckless youths.

"Then be the consequences on your own heads!" vociferated the hag, her livid countenance distorted with rage, and her voice trembling as she spoke. "Ye have drawn down the curse in the height of your pride, like some lofty spire that attracts the storm-cloud which hovers over it. Ye shall all, then,—and ye may believe it when I tell it ye,—*all* die violent

deaths, though different in degree and distant in time. Is that enough? or will ye know your separate doom?"

"Ay, ay! each of us must hear our individual fate, old sibyl, crooked crone, distorted mockery of woman!" said the young men with one voice, but each applying a separate epithet of abuse, while the bystanders once more appealed to them to let the prophecy pass as a general denunciation, without provoking the specific mention of the various ways in which their several lives were to terminate.

But this interference was too late. The old woman would not suppress her wrath, and she resumed her foretelling.

"Well then, you," said she, (fixing her look on Ulric Von Linz,) "you will be drowned! You," (pointing her shrivelled finger at Ludwig of Steinbach,) "you will be hanged! And you," (nodding her head at Count Karl,) "you will die by the hand of a woman! And now with my withering curse upon ye each and all, go on your vile career till the hand of death, in those several ways, cuts ye short, and the foul fiend receives ye for his own!"

With these words her head sunk on her breast, and with closed eyes and compressed lips, as though muttering inwardly some unholy oraison, she sunk into deep thought. The passengers all seemed overwhelmed with horror at the awful foretelling. Murmured ejaculations, frightened looks at the prophetess and her doomed victims escaped them; and, despite their natural courage, their blustering air, and their assumed indifference, a superstitious dread worked in the hearts of the three adventurers, and tamed them into involuntary silence. The passage was soon ended, and every one seemed glad to quit the boat and escape from the uneasy recollection of the scene.

Years rolled on and the three young men were still living; all of them comparatively reclaimed from their vicious career, and all more or less established in the world. Count Karl had returned to his castle of Great Felsberg, and after due course of wooing, had been married to Apna of Lichtenau, one of the loveliest and gentlest maidens of Germany. Often and often used her enamoured husband to say to himself, as he gazed on her sweet face, or held her soft hand in his, "Well, well! if the prophecy of the hag is to be fulfilled in my case, it is not at any rate this beauteous hand that is to grasp the

dagger, or give me the death stroke—these white and taper fingers are not made to dabble in a murdered husband's blood!"

Yet even when his thoughts—in his own despite, for he did not like any allusion, even in thought, to the foretelling—took this turn, he used to feel a chill creep on his heart, and more than once he dropped suddenly, or even flung aside, the beautiful member which he had been just toying with and caressing, so rudely that the tears filled the eyes of the gentle Anna, and her blushes, lest she had offended her beloved lord, spoke reproaches to his violence that cut him to the heart.

He was several times tempted to tell her the secret cause of his emotion; but he was restrained by shame at the necessity of revealing the disreputable frolic of his earlier days, and still more by a shuddering dislike to recur at all to the prophecy which seemed to haunt him like the troubled fancies of a dream.

With the exception of those occasional moments of weakness, Count Karl's days glided on smoothly and happily, with none of the noisy energy of feudal glory, but with enough of enjoyment and importance to satisfy a man who had spent his youth in scenes that wear out rather than nourish the natural vigour of the mind.

Ludwig of Steinbach had, by the sudden death of an elder brother, inherited his title and estates in the close neighbourhood of Great Felsburg. He was there settled in all the power of feudality, and following the example of his friend, the Count of Kreukenthall, he was seeking a suitable match among the maidens of the Rhine valleys, at that period so celebrated for their beauty and the accomplishments that threw a grace over the coarse energy of the age.

Ulric Von Linz had not yet entered into possession of the paternal inheritance, which he reckoned on as one day to be his in the common course of nature. His father still lived. But he had anticipated the usual march of events, and trusting for independence to fortune and his sword, he had clandestinely married a lovely and enthusiastic girl, and entered into the service of the noted Baron Gortz Von Langenfeld, whom he followed to the field in the capacity of squire, and in whose predatory excursions against the wealthy merchants of Frank-

fort, and the burghers of the other commercial towns of Germany, he soon reaped a rich harvest of booty.

Whenever the three friends met, and that was often, they naturally recurred to the passages of former days, and not unfrequently did they revert to the adventures which signalized their tour in Holland, and particularly to that which had left so deep and serious an impression on each of their minds. They often strove amongst each other, as well as when separate, to make light of the foretellings of the old woman, and to consider them as the ravings of ill-temper, or of assumed supernatural knowledge. But it was in vain that they thus argued and wished to believe. The effect was made, and the superstitious dread of the prophecy's fulfilment, though by no means amounting to belief, continually rose before them in the aspect of an unavoidable—but they hoped a remote—reality.

It will be remembered that the promised doom of drowning, denounced by the old woman against Von Linz, was the first of the sequence which has given the title to our Legend. By a curious coincidence—if nothing more mysterious will be allowed by the sceptical reader—the first action of the drama fell in the order so specified.

Ulric Von Linz returned one night in great speed towards the castle of Langenfeld, in which he and his wife, Eleonora, had been granted a commodious lodging by the kindness of his noble master, Baron Gortz. "Blessed be the good Bishop of Bamberg!" thought Ulric. "Blessed also be the worthy provost of St. Babo, by whose intercession the bishop gave me a dispensation for travelling to-day, All Saints' day, a festival which all sinners should keep sacred. Had it not been for this favour I should have been forced to wait till to-morrow to see my beloved Eleanor; and by my patron, St. Gobert! a night of even midsummer passed away from her appears to me the length of Christmas eve, when waiting for the midnight mass! How surprised and happy she will be to see me to-night instead of to-morrow! In half an hour I shall once more clasp her in my arms!"

These thoughts were accompanied by two involuntary strokes of the rider's heels into the flanks of his almost jaded steed, which, so provoked, rose again from its tired ramble into a rapid trot. But besides that uxorious longing which urged

Ulric forwards, there were other reasons which lent fresh force to his desire to reach the castle. The wind blew fiercely. The rain fell in torrents. And it was just the hour when the ghosts of the murdered were wont to strike with fleshless hands at the doors of their relatives and friends, to recommend their suffering souls to pious intercessions. For every one knows that all who may have died a violent death on All Saints' day never rest in their graves, without having punished those who caused their death.

While his various reflections made the bold heart of Ulric palpitate with strange emotion, and he mechanically grasped the lance which rose perpendicularly from his stirrup's rest, he observed, at no great distance, glimmering through the wood, a light, which suddenly fixed the course of his wandering thoughts.

"Heaven be praised!" cried he, breathing more freely, "'tis the castle of Langenfeld. This light shines in the western tower, where my sweet Eleanor and I alone reside. This is a true love signal, lighted up even a day before my expected coming. Like a good Christian and a faithful wife, my Eleanor puts up her prayers for her poor Ulric — I come, I come, my beloved!"

As this brief soliloquy was finished, his horse's hoofs struck on the pavement which announced the close neighbourhood of the Pont-levis. He soon found the horn hanging on its accustomed hook, and he blew a loud blast thereon. The draw-bridge was lowered, and a mail-clad sentry peered out into the gloomy air from a stone sentry-box.

"Ah, master squire! come freely in!" cried he.

At some paces within the porch stood another man, dressed in a gown of black camlet, with a silver chain suspended round his neck. It was Wisembert Von Skreyer, seneschal of the castle, and uncle by his mother's side to Ulric Von Linz.

"Saviour of man!" exclaimed the seneschal, piously making the sign of the cross on his breast. "Is it you, nephew? Holy Virgin! Have you dared, in defiance of the rules of the church, to travel on a day like this? If some great misfortune does not happen to you for so serious a sin, assuredly you are more lucky than wise!"

"Comfort yourself, my worthy uncle, I am on safe ground. I carry dispensation from his reverence the Bishop of Bam-

berg ; and thanks to the sacred parchment, I have not met with ghost or goblin on my way. And well it was, for though I am not a man to shrink from sword or lance, yet at every step I dreaded to see the withered skeletons of some of those bold men-at-arms killed by my hand, this day twelve months at the pass of Furth—Heigh ! halloo, there, varlet !” cried he to a groom who passed near in the direction of the stables ; “ here, take my horse to his stall, and tend him well. He is used to good fare of late, for he comes from Bamberg palace, where he had litter to his belly, and where the seneschal never stints man nor beast, like some whom I know, who make a fuss about a bundle of straw, a measure of oats, or a flask of Rhein wine.”

While he spoke, Ulric alighted from his horse, threw the bridle to the groom, shook the rain from his cloak and morion, stuffed his battle-axe and dagger into their respective sheaths by the saddle sides, stretched his arms and legs, which all felt cramped after his long ride and soaking seat ; then, grasping his sword in one hand and his lance in the other, he plunged into a low dark corridor, and soon reached the wide and solitary hall of the castle. The walls of this apartment were covered with armour and implements of war, some of which hung in dark and gloomy patches, while others reflected, in their polished plates and blades, the rays of a lamp suspended from the ceiling.

Ulric placed his sword and lance in their accustomed places. He next pulled off his huge boots, which at the outside looked as if solely formed of flexible iron straps, but they were lined with a thick coat of leather. He then stripped off his shirt of mail, which was one of those brigandines covered with little steel rings, the ends of the sleeves formed to receive the hands in a species of fingerless gloves, which were split in the palm to admit the wearer’s weapons and bridle being grasped readily. At the height of the shoulder the iron covered tunic was joined to a hood of the same sort of tissue, and which could be drawn over the head in the hour of battle. Three openings in front admitted of free sight and breathing : and this kind of sack, rounded by a buff leather lining, sometimes served the place of a casque.

Freed from his cumbrous accoutrements, Ulric remained in the doe-skin pourpoint and *haut-de-Chausées*, which, fitting him

closely, showed his slight and sinewy figure from head to foot. He immediately began to ascend the spiral stairs of the round tower, inhabited by himself and his wife. As he stole up, his unbooted feet making no sound on the stone steps, he chuckled with joy, anticipating the sweet surprise he was about to cause his longing wife. He reached the door, opened it so gently that it made not the slightest noise, and beheld—O fury, torments, and demons!—his beloved Eleanor clasped in the arms of his perfidious chieftain, Baron Gortz. He fiercely, but without a word, threw his hand against his side, but no dagger was there to meet its grasp. He fixed his eyes on the guilty pair. They saw him not—theirs were blinded in criminal delight. His revenge must be for a few moments deferred. In a frightful access of despair he turned away, and meant to enter the armoury in search of his arms. His confusion turned his head—no wonder that his steps turned wrong. He missed the entrance to the right passage; stepped into a wrong opening, which in the deep gloom he did not perceive to be the platform of the tower; made another false and forward step—instantly the deep water of the castle ditch sent upwards the echo of a heavy splash—Ulric had tumbled in.

Within a quarter of an hour the chapel bell was heard sounding the call to vespers. Soldiers, varlets, the household maidens, and the ladies of honour of the baroness, all entered the chapel and began their devotions. Dame Eleanor, her cheeks slightly tinted with an unusual blush, took her place close to the cushion-covered stool where knelt her pious, virtuous, and ill-treated mistress, Gertrude of Erbach, the neglected wife of Baron Gortz.

After the almoner had recited the evening prayers, and the congregation had performed the due responses, and the psalms were chanted, and the blessing pronounced, soldiers, varlets, household maidens, and all retired; some to their military duties, the others to their beds. Old Wisambert, the seneschal, going out of the chapel one of the latest, gravely addressed his nephew's wife, who was exchanging in a whisper some furtive observations with Baron Gortz. "Dame Eleanor," said he, "you should admonish your husband not to absent himself thus from the household prayers, particularly on such a holy day as this."

"Master Wisambert," replied she, gaily, "I little doubt

that Ulric has performed his duties to-day—it is not in the palace of a bishop that devotion is neglected.”

“I do not understand your jest,” said the seneschal; “you may have reasons for keeping your husband’s return a secret, but not from me, for I was the first who saw him cross the drawbridge scarce an hour gone.”

Eleanor turned pale, and Baron Gortz showed some slight embarrassment; Wisambert, convinced by the anxious tone and look of his niece, as she uttered some exclamations of surprise, felt a thrill of anxiety. “What then has become of him?” exclaimed he. “He could not have quitted the castle again unobserved. The bridge is up—the portcullis down—Heaven grant that no evil is hidden in this mystery! Ah, this was no day to undertake a journey!” And while the weeping Eleanor followed her mistress to perform her duties as one of the ladies of honour, the seneschal, attended by several varlets, hurried from place to place throughout the castle, loudly calling forth his nephew’s name.

The dawn began to break, but no traces of him were discovered.

The disappearance of the squire was soon the common topic of discourse within the wide precincts of the castle. It spread from the halls to the courts, and thence quickly reached the guard-room close to the outermost porch.

“Paul,” said the centinel to the man whose turn it was to relieve him, and who yawned and stretched after his six hours of sleep, “Paul, this is a curious affair about the Squire Ulric.”

“The Squire Ulric?” echoed the other, drowsily.

“Ay,—you know he passed into the castle yesterday evening, near vesper time, and since then nobody has seen or heard of him.”

“Thunder of Heaven! that explains the noise I heard in the fosse, while I walked my hours near the western tower. The Squire Ulric is drowned, comrade.”

“Drowned!”

“Ay, as sure as there are twenty feet of water in the fosse. The night was as cold and as dark as—as hell,” (continued the soldier, puzzled for a simile,) “when, wrapped in my cloak and half dozing on my post, I heard a sudden scream from a man’s voice, and then a splash into the water. I saw

nothing ;— I cried, Who goes there ?—got no answer. After that it was no business of mine you know, comrade ; but there is little doubt it was the squire, who threw himself from the tower and was drowned."

" But what could have driven him to such a deed ? "

The soldier resumed in a low whisper, — " Why, as for that, there may be another version of the adventure. You know the Baron loves Madame Eleanor, — every one knew it but Ulric ; and who can tell but to get rid of him—dark night—a high tower—a deep ditch ! Tell me, comrade, did you never hear that our Baron poisoned his father to inherit the sooner——"

" Hist ! silence, Paul ! Such a whisper as that might lead a man to the gallows. God have mercy on us ! These are awful times, and we live in a wicked world ! If this be true, it is a bad turn for the Baron. Yesterday was All-Saints' day, and no man murdered on that day can rest in his grave till he be avenged."

The two soldiers trembled with superstitious dread ; and in a moment more an impatient, but as they thought an unearthly cry for admission was heard from outside the fortress—it was the voice of Ulric !

The soldiers lowered the draw-bridge, with a mixture of hope and fear ; but at the sight of him who claimed entrance the latter feeling alone had place in their minds, a thousand-fold greater than before.

It was indeed the face and form of the Squire Ulric on which they gazed ; but as they gazed and trembled, they instinctively made the sign of the cross. Ulric looked more like a corpse than a living man. His cheeks were pale and lank ; his eyes sunken and fixed. He said nothing, but his lips moved as though he muttered some words to himself ; and when he seized Paul by the hand and gave it a convulsive squeeze, *his* felt cold, clammy, and stiff.

" Tell me, comrade," murmured Paul, as the figure passed on, " hast thou ever seen a ghost ? "

" Never—*before !* " replied the other ; and both slunk into the guard-house, shivering with terror.

The figure continued to stalk forwards, silently, and making no pause, nor giving sign of recognition to aught that met or crossed its path, till Baron Gortz himself came suddenly upon

it, as it prepared to enter the portal which led to the banquetting room. Then its pale face grew still more livid ; and a shudder of suppressed rage seemed to pass over its whole frame. The baron shook in every joint, like all the previous beholders ; but recovering himself, he assumed a haughty air of displeasure, and said aloud, — “Ulric ! whence and how come you here in this strange plight, unarmed, and drenched with rain ? You arrived last night—your uncle told me so. Why have you not communicated to me the result of your mission to the Bishop of Bamberg ? Why and how did you quit the castle again, and unperceived ? ”

“ I saw soon after I entered it that I had lost something most valuable—the receipt given by his reverence for the ransom, which I duly paid. I scaled the postern to seek it, — here it is : *that* mission is completed.”

Such were the words spoken, but the slow, deep tones resembled little the Squire Ulric’s living voice ; and the action which suited to the words, was more like the mechanical movement of an automaton than the outstretching of a human arm.

“ And how seems this besotted bishop disposed in the affair ? ”

“ He refuses,” replied the figure, “ to release you from the ban. But what need you care for his excommunication ? Were I in your place, noble baron, I would seek revenge instead of settlement. I would have back my ten thousand silver marks. His palace is badly guarded. He goes this day to meet the emperor. He takes half the garrison for escort. Two hundred well armed men, led on by your impetuous valour, would take the rich stronghold in an hour.”

“ What say you, Ulric ? Repeat me this,” exclaimed Baron Gortz ; and taking the figure by the arm, they walked whispering off together towards a private place, the shuddering observers murmuring to each other, “ The brave baron is lost : he is in the power of the fiend ! ”

In another half hour the whole castle of Langenfeld was in the greatest possible bustle. Four hundred warriors were making their rapid preparations for departure ; and the baron was seen urging on the different groups in every direction.

Standing on the lower step of the round tower stairs, the figure that so resembled, yet so mocked, the likeness of Ulric

von Linz, looked on the busy scene with a faint and fiendlike smile, that made the beholders sick at heart. While so absorbed, a soothing voice whispered in the ear of the statue-like figure,—“Ulric, my best loved Ulric! can it be that, after the torture of suspense you have caused me for the livelong night, you now go away again without one word, one look exchanged with your Eleanor? Cruel husband, you love me no longer!”

The figure turned slowly round, and threw on her so terrific a scowl that the shocked woman almost sunk in horror on the ground. Consciousness of her fault and momentary repentance kept her from fainting outright. Overcoming her repugnance and her fright, she murmured, “Oh, Ulric, how ghastly, how deathlike you look! Come, come with me above, up to our tower, and let all this sad mystery turn to joy!”

A hideous smile relaxed the rigid features on which she gazed.

“Come!” said the figure.

“Why, how now? What is this?” exclaimed Baron Gortz, in affected bantering, and riding over towards the tower stairs. “Ulric alone unarmed, and all the rest on horseback and in movement! A plague on all newly married men! They think more of dalliance and love than of donning a coat of mail. This way, Ulric, come!”

“A moment, chieftain. I shall catch you at the end of the avenue,” said the figure. The baron rode away, with an envious look. In a few seconds Eleanor was on the upper platform of the tower, held fast in the deathlike grasp of her terrible companion.

“Here is our chamber, dearest,” said she, trembling and afraid to look on him.

“Stop, *here!*” rejoined the figure. “Tell me now, while looking down below on that deep ditch into which Ulric the deceived fell yesternight, art thou not a faithful wife?”

Eleanor fixed her glazed looks on the demoniacal smile which curdled her blood. “Mercy, mercy!” cried she. “Have pity on my soul!”

“May thy soul, then, be saved—but may *his* be damned for ever!”

With these words, accompanied by a piercing scream from the agonised woman, the frightful scene was finished. A

struggle on the platform's verge — a fluttering motion as she was cast below — a heavy splash — and all was over.

That very evening, at sunset, as the provost of the episcopal palace of Bamberg was busily occupied in paying the amount of their daily hire to the numerous workmen who were at that period employed in the repairs of the cathedral church hard by, he observed, from the little lodge in which he was stationed at one end of the bridge which communicated with the main street of the town, the figure of a man armed at all points, his visor down, galloping full speed towards the palace. As soon as this person perceived that he attracted the attention of those beyond the bridge, he threw a piece of crumpled parchment on the road, and turning round suddenly was out of sight before any of the observers could even form a plan for stopping him.

The parchment was soon picked up by the provost's order, and found to contain the following words :

"Baron Gortz comes to-night, with 400 warriors, to annul the Bishop of Bamberg's excommunication, to receive back his 10,000 silver marks, pillage the palace, and burn it to the ground."

"Up with the draw-bridge ! Down with the portcullis ! Workmen all, stand fast ! Let no man stir but to mount the ramparts and round towers ! Carry up stones in hundreds to hurl down on the foe ! Holloa ! captain of the archers, muster your platoons, look well to your bows and quivers ! Men at arms, belt on your jackets of proof, accoutre your horses and stand firm and ready ! Canons of our holy cathedral, while we fight for the blessed house of God, pray in the church, and send up hymns to heaven !"

Such were among the manifold orders given throughout the precincts of the episcopal palace of Bamberg, as soon as the mysterious warning was promulgated within. Prompt obedience was given to each command. Every one shuddered at the threatened approach of the terrible Baron Gortz : all felt it to be a case of life and death.

And wild and various were the reports that spread abroad, as to the identity of him who gave the important warning. Many swore solemnly that he melted into air as soon as he threw the scroll upon the ground. Others testified as to the ethereal flames that issued from his horse's feet and nostrils,

and played like a halo round his head. Some talked of fiery wings on which he mounted towards heaven. The least credulous believed that it was the archangel Michael, sent especially by the Virgin to preserve from ruin the cathedral dedicated to her glory.

At daybreak the next morning, Baron Gortz and three hundred and seventy-six of his followers lay dead in the fosses and at the foot of the ramparts of the bishop's palace. *Te Deum* was sung gratis for the victory, and *de profundis* for the souls of those whose friends chose to pay for it.

A scanty band of those who escaped the slaughter returned sorrowfully to Langenfeld. There were not many words spoken on the retreat. But two of the men who rode close together, both severely wounded, held the following short colloquy as they came in sight of the western round tower.

"Well, Paul, what do you think of this bloody business?"

"Why I think, comrade, that the ghost of Ulric Von Linz may not rest quietly in the grave."

The news of this remarkable transaction was quickly bruited throughout Germany. In every circle, in the remotest villages and the most completely insulated castles, as well as in the populous towns, it was soon well known that the famous Gortz of Langenfeld was traitorously entrapped to his ruin by the ghost of his drowned squire; and many a sermon on morality was preached to the lascivious nobles — these events serving as the text — by monks and friars, who discanted loudly on the sin (and privately whispered on the imprudence) of carrying on an adulterous intercourse — with unbolted doors.

But if the story soon became the common talk of the country, excited horror and superstition in the minds of mere general listeners, what were its effects on those of Ulric's two surviving friends, Ludwig of Steinbach and Count Karl Von Kreukenthal?

The ruin or the death of a dear companion is a sad event to the sympathetic bosom of human friendship, when it leads to, or carries a warning of one's own. There is therefore small doubt that Count Karl and Baron Ludwig suffered intensely when they learned the sad story of their old companion's fate. And great were the encomiums passed on their goodness of heart and keen sensibility, by those who observed their emotion when they first heard the story told,

and the shuddering agitation with which they received every subsequent mention of it.

And its effect on the morals as well as the feelings of the two friends was not a little remarkable. Steinbach suddenly renounced a most sinful share in a conspiracy (for a purpose which he previously thought very patriotic) against the emperor,—the latter having promulgated a decree declaring that all rebels or plotters, no matter what their rank, should for the future die the felon's death of *hanging*, the moment of their discovery. Count Karl, at the same time gave up the pursuit of two or three low amours, which, in spite of his plighted troth, he had warmly entered on; and it was remarked, that such was his excess of chastity, that he never touched a *woman's hand*, save that of his wife; and often did she observe the increased horror with which at times he shrunk from even the soft pressure of *hers*.

But the years continued to roll on; and by degrees Count Karl and his friend reverted to the fate of poor Ulric, as one of those extraordinary coincidences which so frequently startle us in our passage through life. They took every possible pains to fortify each other's disbelief as to the supernatural power of the old Dutch-woman, and they endeavoured still to laugh to scorn her foretellings—at least those which regarded themselves. What chance indeed, what possibility almost, of their ever being fulfilled?

Count Karl was now the father of children; and so cautious was he grown, so unapproachable in fact by any thing wearing the semblance of the female form (always excepting the gentle Anna), that he had acquired universally the title of woman-hater, from the odium of which he was not freed, even in consideration of the close attachment which seemed to bind him wholly to his wife.

Baron Ludwig was married and settled quietly in his castle, carefully eschewing conspiracies and all other things which might be likely to end in hanging; and so strict in avoiding all contact with a rope, that he saw a wing of that very castle burned down one night, sooner than lend a hand to the exhausted servants who worked at the well, or pull up another bucket of water, which every one declared would have stopped the conflagration.

Nevertheless—but we will regularly proceed to lead the

reader to the second part of the drama, arising from the old Dutchwoman's foretellings.

The legend does not record whether the invitation was given by the count or the baron ; but sure it is, that one fine morning in September they went out together into the woods of Great Felsberg, attended by a goodly train of men and dogs, to hunt the wild boar, an animal which then abounded in the forests, in numbers enough to fill with envy of the good old times the modern sportsman, who is doomed to many a day of fruitless toil, in vain endeavours to rouse up even one of those monsters from its lair.

The cause of the particular day on which this hunting party took place being so fixed, was the unusual circumstance of the Countess Anna having decided on it on which to pay a visit, which was intended to end with the morrow, to her noble aunt, Baroness Eldegonda Von Lichtenau, who had just arrived at a neighbouring castle for a sojourn of some weeks, to superintend the vintage, from which she derived a large revenue, but which, from circumstances foreign to our story, called imperiously for the mistress's eye at this juncture.

"And so, Anna, thou hast fixed on this morning positively for thy visit?"

"Yes, my husband, if it so pleases thee; but if not, I can postpone it, or put it off entirely——"

"No, no, Anna, thou must go—I will not thwart thee in thy duty to this relative of thine—I will not have it said that Karl, the woman-hater," (and at these words the count attempted to laugh,) "carried his jealousy as far as his repugnance, and kept even his wife from visiting her aunt."

"My dear husband, thy will is my law. I go, as thou biddest it—but I grieve to mark that thou art pained even when thou seemest to smile. Speak frankly, mine own Karl—what is it that thus moves thee?"

"Nought but a foolish weakness, my Anna—wilt thou bear with it? It is, in truth, but my reluctance to part with thee for a night—an unworthy misgiving seems to steal over me at being left alone—but go, go, my wife—thy duty, and perhaps our interest, requires this mark of attention to thy aunt."

"Ah, Karl! how delightful is it to see, in this objection to my absenting myself even for a day, such sweet proof of thy

unaltered love ! Come, come ! cheer up, my husband — thou shalt be rewarded for this — I will prove myself not less loving than thou art."

With these words Countess Anna placed her arm affectionately on her husband's shoulder, and taking one of his hands in hers, she continued — " Yes, Karl, this is true happiness — to find myself so dear to thee still — to know that for my sake thou hast given up (and it is not for me to blame the excess) even the acquaintanceship, not to say the friendship, of every other living woman ! And is it indeed for love of me thou hast done this ? Are all the early habits and frolics of thy youth — and they have told me, Karl, thou wert wayward and truant in those days — are *all* forgotten ? "

" Forgotten ! " echoed the count, with a shudder.

" And dost thou indeed and for ever renounce all that used to be so dear to thee, Karl, — pleasure, society, the world ? And all for the sake of her who has little to requite the sacrifice, but the truth of a fond heart and the pressure of a friendly hand ! "

" Anna, Anna, this is torture in its worst shape ! Press not my hand in thine — good wife, release me — my blood tingles and runs chill ! Oh ! fate, fate, what wouldst thou of me ? Let the curse at once fall down and end these pangs ! "

Count Karl, violently snatching away his hand as he gave utterance to this outburst of suffering, sank on a seat. His gentle countess placed herself beside him, terrified at his strange emotion. " Why, Karl, my beloved, how or what is this ? This is the worst of those strange symptoms which from time to time I have observed in thee, when in the very moments of love's dalliance thou hast shrunk and started from my side, as though thou hadst felt a basilisk's touch, not mine. But never did look so fearful distort thy countenance — never words so wild break from thy trembling lips, since the day that brought the sad news of poor Ulric Von Linz being drowned — "

" Drowned, hanged, stabbed in the dark, or choked by some fair yet treacherous fingers ! Ay, those were the promised endings of our days of life ! Stabbed ! strangled ! Ha, ha, ha ! 'tis wondrous droll — is it not, my Anna ? I feel the soft yet deadly grasp on my throat this moment, and my heart throbs as though it vibrated to the feeble, yet sufficient stroke ! Ha, ha, ha ! Bear with me, Anna — thou hast roused strange

visions in my mind—but the fit is passing away—forgive—forget this phrensy—kiss me, dearest! No—not thy hand again! just kiss my parched lips, and my cold brow, sweet one! There, that is enough!”

“Karl, Karl, my beloved! I will not, cannot quit thy side to-day—thou must not pass this night alone!”

“Yes, Anna, yes! I must not add disgrace to agony. I am ashamed of this—I must not suffer self-contempt for this childish weakness to turn into dislike of her who witnessed it—of *thee*, my gentle wife.”

“Dear Karl, I will run the risk.”

“Thou shalt not, love, nor will I. Man’s mind is a strange mystery, Anna. Even when he knows himself unjust, and hates himself the while, he cannot stem the tide that turns that hate on others. Thou must now set out for Lichtenau, good wife. I hear thy palfry neighing in the court-yard. And see! the sun slopes over Felsberg crags—’tis late, my love—thy aunt expects thee. To horse, to horse, my Anna! I shall be with thee a part of the way—as far as the cross-roads of the four brothers, where I am to meet Von Steinbach and take to our forest sports.”

In a very short time the Count and Countess were mounted and away. They had neither of them much appetite for the repast prepared in the refectory; and few words were spoken by either as they passed through the court-yard, across the moat, and into the plantations and garden-ground that skirted the castle. As soon as they gained the road leading to the main route of Lichtenau, Countess Anna resolved to make an attempt to rouse her husband from the uneasy mood of thought into which he was sunk. “Dear Karl,” said she, leaning towards him across her palfry’s neck, “I would that we might traverse alone the half-league of the road to cross-way where we are to part. Let my women and page, with the varlets, and all this noisy train of dogs and huntsmen, take the shorter and closer path through the forest skirt, while we quietly ride on together. Wilt thou, love?”

“Will I? Canst thou imagine a refusal to a proposal, Anna, that will give me a half-hour more of thy sweet company unbroken in upon?” And the Count instantly gave orders in conformity with the wish of his wife.

They were soon alone, walking their steeds at a slow pace

towards the appointed spot for parting. The Countess scarcely knew how to accomplish her purpose of withdrawing her husband's reflections from that inward gulf in which they seemed plunged. It struck her that probably the best way would be to make them revert to some subject foreign to any personal cause of trouble ; and she playfully asked him if he would tell her a story.

"A story, Anna?" exclaimed he starting, and with a look of surprise ; "why, what child's thought has taken possession of thy brain?"

"None, but the desire to see thee look less absorbed in manhood's cares, my husband. So do repeat me somewhat of thy early adventures — or tell me some tales of local tradition which abound so in this part of the county. I have heard many a one since I came to live at Great Felsberg, but every spot around has its romantic legend of old times and scenes gone by. Come, Karl, stir up thy memory, and tell me some brief tale to turn me from sadness."

"Well, since thou wilt — and by my troth I believe thou art wise, my wife — I'll tell thee the legend that lends its name to the cross-roads where we shall part anon——"

"The cross-roads of the four brothers? I never knew there was a legend about it."

"There is though, my love — and it is called **THE BE-WITCHED FIDDLESTICK**. Will you hear it, Anna?"

"Ay, ay, Karl! The title sounds invitingly droll, and there is nought serious in it — just what I would list to in this morning's mood."

"Listen, then!" said the count, as reigning in still closer his steed, so as to check even his previous drowsy pace, he proceeded to recount the legend. "Konrad Gerloch was the best minstrel in the town of Kreukenthal. In no village, for ten miles round, would the young folks have danced in good heart, if any other than Konrad played the bass-viol at the wedding and christening parties. He was of course a personage of consequence — and he knew it. He sat at the upper table with the parents of the newly married or newly born. The best bits and a goblet of the oldest wine were reserved for him. Whenever he spoke, all ears listened, for none knew better the knack of telling a story, sung a better song, or cracked a readier joke.

"It was one evening in winter that there was a wedding at Freisbach. They danced late ; and it was pitch-dark, and the night far advanced, when old Konrad strapped his bass-viol on his back, and announced his intention of setting out for home. 'Stay, where you are, good Konrad,' said the whole party with one voice ; 'the wind is to the north — it hails fast — the forest is not safe at an hour like this. Wolves and bandits abound — to say nothing of the witches who hold their sabbath in it.'

" 'Tut, tut !' said the obstinate and foolhardy old man ; 'I have a flask or two of good Rhine wine under my belt, a furred cloak for my shoulders, and this iron-ended stick in my hand. Thus I defy cold, wolves, and robbers ! As for witches or goblins, if I meet any, I'll make them dance to the sound of my viol—and they'll confess, I'll warrant it, that hell holds no minstrel like old Konrad Gerloch.'

"With these words, which made the young folk laugh and the old ones look grave, he gave a double roll to his fox-skin cloak, and set out to walk, with a firm and steady pace, the path through the forest from Friesbach to Kreukenthal.

"He was not a quarter of an hour on his way when the sky became more and more overcast, and at length every object was shrouded in gloom. Konrad began to regret his obstinacy, and longed for the good bed he had left behind him. But he never dreamt of returning. After all his bragging, he had not courage enough to brave the ridicule and the reproaches which he knew would have greeted him had he gone back. He therefore sturdily walked on ; but the very first glimmering of star-light which broke through the clouds, showed him that he had lost his way.

"What was now to be done ? To proceed would only entangle him the deeper. To wrap himself in his cloak and lie down at the foot of a tree was a comfortless and hazardous alternative ; for if he did not perish from cold, he would be most undoubtedly devoured by wolves. While he turned over in his mind these various views of his case, leaning with both hands on the top of his stick, he could not help muttering a smothered imprecation — and he bounded with joy at perceiving a sudden light dart through the foliage. 'It burns in the hut of some woodman !' exclaimed he ; 'St. Babo be praised !'

"He stepped forwards, but instantly the light disappeared.

He struck the earth with his stick, and uttered a fierce oath. No sooner had the blasphemy passed his lips, than the light was again visible !

“ It was not without great difficulty, and after threading many a tortuous path, that Konrad reached the spot where the light still burned. A sort of unholy instinct kept him from using any word of pious tendency—and on he went, his way illumined by the strange and growing brilliancy. Nothing could exceed his surprise when he at length arrived opposite a vast and splendid-looking castle, which he had never before seen nor heard of in those parts. Music swelled suddenly on the air, and groups of dancers passed to and fro within the windows, their dark shadows rapidly traced on the curtains, transparent in a deep red flame.

“ Konrad walked round and round the building, but could find no door, porch, or gate of entrance. At length an old man appeared by his side without his having perceived his approach. He handed a bugle-horn to the minstrel, who instantly put it to his mouth, and blew a blast that made the forest ring. A drawbridge was instantly let down, and Konrad, somewhat bewildered, but too happy at the prospect of shelter and hospitality to ask any questions, followed the old man, and was soon in a magnificent saloon in the very heart of the castle.

“ All that he witnessed filled him with amaze. A crowd of people was before him ; some employed in the luxurious indulgences of the table, on a repast of a magnificence so wondrous that it at once made Konrad hungry, yet took away his appetite. Numerous parties were occupied in play, at games and with appurtenances which his homely experience had never heard of. But the greatest number were whirling in a maze of dances of the most wild and fantastic variety.

“ Old Konrad marched boldly up to a tall and portly man, whose manner of authority and politeness united, marked him for the host of all this fine company. ‘ My lord chieftain,’ said he, ‘ I am a poor minstrel, who have lost my way and found myself here, without knowing how or why. Pray allow me to pass the night in some corner of your castle, and I promise you to take myself off at daybreak without saying a word of what has passed.’

“ Konrad felt that he had gone too far in betraying his mis-

givings that all was not as it should be. But a benevolent smile from the tall gentleman reassured him. At his beckon a page came forward, unstrapped the bass-viol from the minstrel's back, and hung it up on one of the gilded nails which glittered in different parts of the chamber among the rich hangings. While the page did this, he gave a grin of an expression so diabolical that old Konrad shuddered with fear—and still more when he saw that the place where the page had held his instrument was blackened and burned as though his hand had been on fire!

“Old Konrad became confused and fearful. He walked about the room, but no one took notice of him. He vainly strove to discover an acquaintance—for he was known to all the nobles of the country—but whenever he fixed his looks on a face, a light vapour immediately spread over it, so as totally to conceal the features. While he strove to convince himself that all these strange things were real, he perceived all at once a bass-viol of most beautiful form, and elegantly ornamented, standing close at the foot of the orchestra where the musicians were seated. Seized with a fit of envious vanity, and resolved to give a proof of his skill to the goodly company and the band of his brother minstrels, he laid hold of the instrument, and at the same time took up the bow which lay beside it. The moment his fingers touched the bow they thrilled with a nervous sense of pain—Konrad attempted to throw away the bow, but in vain—it stuck to his hand as though it formed a part of him. Shocked and astonished, he looked round for aid, or some solution of these many mysteries—and then to his utter horror he observed, grinning at him from the orchestra, the cadaverous countenance of old Martin Metzler, his first master of music, who had been dead and buried for upwards of thirty years.

“‘Holy Virgin, take pity on me!’ exclaimed Konrad. And at the words, musicians, dancers, gamblers, feasters—all, together with the castle itself, vanished from before his eyes.

“The next morning, some of the wedding guests who, more prudent than the old minstrel, had put off till daylight their return to Kreukenthal, found the poor traveller lying senseless at the foot of a gibbet by the roadside, a very beautifully wrought fiddlestick in his hand.

“ ‘Holloa!’ cried one, ‘what have we here? By the mass! old Konrad has chosen a hard couch!’

“ ‘And a strange pin for his viol and bow,’ said another. ‘There they hang on the foot of the murderer’s skeleton!’

“ ‘And, devils and goblins!’ exclaimed a third, ‘was he afraid that the blanched bones would be cold in the night? Here is his cloak spread over the fleshless shoulders!’

“ ‘What a calculating old fellow he is!’ observed one of the party, who strove to rouse up the old musician; ‘see, he brought two bows with him, that he might not be at a loss if he broke or lost one of them.’

“ Brought fairly to himself by the persevering efforts of the good peasants, Konrad soon recovered his presence of mind and his usual cunning air of importance. He attributed to the cold the cause of his state of insensibility;—but he took good care not to say a word of the infernal vision which he had seen and acted in during the night.

“ But safely lodged in his cottage, he carefully examined the bow of which he had become so strangely possessed. A thrill of terror was the result. The bow was nothing more nor less than a dead man’s bone highly polished; and on it he observed, curiously cut, the name of a neighbour, well known in the town as a practitioner in many different ways of magic. Konrad waited till night set in, and then he took his way to the house of this man of evil fame.

“ ‘Good Father Hans,’ said he, with reverential tone and abject salutation, ‘here is a fiddlestick which I believe to be yours, and which I found last night.’

“ The wizard grew pale at these words. After a pause of agitation, he murmured:—‘Ah, Master Konrad, you saw strange sights last night! A word from you could do me great mischief!’

“ ‘God forbid that I should say it, neighbour!’

“ ‘You are right, Konrad; for were I burned alive, some ill might happen to you!’

“ Konrad rose to retire, for he was becoming very uneasy once more. The wizard, however, held him down again, and putting his head close, whispered into his ear—‘Who are your enemies, Konrad? I will this very night throw a curse on their cattle, or a withering spell on them!’

“ ‘I have no enemies, neighbour, and I wish ill to no one.’

“ ‘How, then, can I be useful to you?’ ”

“ ‘Give him this purse! It will puzzle him to spend all it contains, for squander what he may, nine golden crowns will always remain at the bottom.’ ”

“ These words were spoken by a tall man, who was not most assuredly in the wizard’s little closet when Konrad entered it. How did he come in, for the door was carefully closed? His face had a sinister and wild expression, but his smile reminded the minstrel of that which passed across the countenance of the lord of the forest castle, as he had seen him the night before.

“ ‘This is the work of the evil-one!’ cried Konrad, — ‘I will not risk my soul by accepting it.’ ”

“ ‘If this purse is the work of the fiend, I am damned!’ exclaimed the stranger, with a forced and bitter laugh.

“ Konrad, half re-assured, and tempted beyond resistance by the tingling sound of the gold pieces as the stranger chinked them in his hand, could not refuse. He took the purse from the stranger, put it in his double pocket, and when he looked round again, the tempter was gone. Konrad was almost sure he smelt the faint odour of brimstone, but that might (as he wished to think) have been fancy.

“ In a little while all things were changed with old Konrad. He was soon the purchaser of a handsome house, and he lived in the style of the wealthiest burgher of Kreukenthal. He nevertheless, for appearance sake, kept up the practice of his art. He attended and played at the balls and weddings as before; but he travelled on the back of a well-caparisoned and drowsy-paced mule, while a varlet trudged beside him, carrying the bass-viol in a case.

“ This new order of things caused much conjecture in the burg. The received opinion was, of course, that Konrad had found a treasure, and that it was hid in his house.

“ Now Konrad had four nephews, good-for-nothing fellows, for whom he would do absolutely nothing. One day they said among themselves, ‘Our uncle is now rich, — we should not be in want —’ ”

“ It was enough. Each procured an arbalette, and all took their station at the cross roads, where Konrad was sure to pass that very day. The minstrel’s hour was come — the term of his compact expired; — four arrows pierced him at once — he fell dead; — his varlet, more lucky, escaped.

"The four brothers, forgetting in their avidity this witness of their crime, ran to strip the body and seize the key of the house. But a tall man of terrible aspect was already in possession of the murdered carcass, which he threw across his shoulder; then with a yell of laughter that echoed through the wood, he exclaimed, 'I bought it! I bought it!' and in a moment more he disappeared.

"While the murderers stood in the double terror of guilt and superstition, they were surrounded by the provost and his archers, whom the varlet had met in the wood. The bloody hands — the varlet's evidence — the disappearance of Konrad, were more than enough. The four murderers were hanged, each on the tree which concealed them from their luckless uncle. It was long before their story about the fiend who carried away the body obtained belief. But the death-bed confession of Hans, the wizard, confirmed it, and established the whole of this legend. — And here we are, my own Anna, at the cross roads of the four brothers!"

"St. Elfrida protect and bless us!" piously exclaimed the countess, who, in spite of her assumed air of gaiety as her husband told the story, had grown deadly pale by the time she reached the fatal spot, where her imagination conjured up the closing scene of the tragedy.

"Thou hast never before heard this old tale?" asked the count.

"Never so minutely told as now, — nor yet that the minstrel sold himself to the fiend for gold. Olivy, the intendant's wife, who once amused me with some mention of the strange adventure, even said that it was the curse of an old woman that caused poor Konrad's ruin."

"Indeed," said Count Karl, with much emotion and in a tone of alarm.

"Heavens, my husband! what causes this look and that accent? Hast thou seen aught that thy eyes should start forward thus, and thy lip quiver? Or does the mere name of woman move thee so?"

"Woman, my Anna, young or old is a dangerous animal — thou, thou alone excepted! Here we part, love, can't lean towards me and exchange one kiss? Good morning and a good journey, dearest."

"Oh, Karl, Karl!" said the countess, a flood of tears

bursting out and breaking the sentence into almost incoherent words, "this kindness, this affection tortures me even more than thy mysterious air of suffering. — What ailest thee, my husband? Thou art ill at heart, and wilt not deign to unbosom thyself here, — here in this true breast."

"No, no, sweet flower of Lichtenau!" replied the count, with a softened, but forced air of gallantry and gaiety. "No, I am well, very well; but all men have a demon, Anna, and I mine."

"A demon!" said the countess, gazing intently on her husband.

"Ay, Anna, even so—a demon in the shape of some wild passion, some strange fancy, some wayward notion—no matter what its shape, but still a demon that haunts and harasses us at times. But I too, Anna, possess an angel to counteract the workings of the fiend—to lead back my vexed thoughts again—to keep the balance even—nay, to bear down in joy's fulness the scale in which the good is weighed against the ills of life."

"'Tis sweet to hear thee talk thus, Karl, yet I am not quite satisfied. A spell hangs o'er this accursed spot; the evil one seems to haunt it still! Good day, good sport, my husband! Bear thee well till thou feelest this fond hand once more!"

So saying, the countess cantered off, followed by her attendants, a smile lighting up her countenance and making even her tears glisten, as though sorrow was brightened by some up-rising beam of comfort. Count Karl had nearly relapsed into his wayward mood at his wife's parting words, and the ever-springing pang which the touch, the thought, or the mention of a woman's hand created. But he gave spurs to his steed, and exchanging one more kind look with his fair partner, he galloped away into the wood; and at the appointed rendezvous, he found his friend, Ludwig, waiting with a train suiting his state and the object of the meeting.

It was just at this season that large flocks of wild pigeons, migrating from the northern parts of Europe, came down to the forest shelter of Germany and France, and were caught on their passage by the peasants and sportsmen of those countries, by various devices which occupied for awhile men, women, and children. One of the most obvious means of entrapment was the use of large nets suspended from the

trees in the open ways of the woods where the passage of the birds was most likely to take place. As Karl, Ludwig, and their party now trotted on the paths, while the dogs and prickers beat strongly the brush-wood at either side, they were often obliged to stoop low, to pass freely under the nets that dangled above the road, and they at times amused themselves by observing the struggling prisoners, who flapped their entangled wings in the treacherous meshes.

The two nobles were always glad of an opportunity of meeting and being alone together. There seemed to be a sort of mysterious sympathy leading them to this, particularly since the sad catastrophe that tore poor Von Linz from their fellowship; yet it was strange, too, that they should so associate, for they never met that a cloud of gloom did not hang over them, colouring their looks, their feelings, and their discourse.

But it must be something more real than superstitious weakness, something of actual, material ill, that could overpower the exhilarating inspiration of the chase in two beings in manhood's prime, bold, ardent, and enterprising. As the horns sounded, and the dogs gave tongue, and the wild boars snorted defiance, and bared their tusks for fight, the friends forgot all misgivings, all memory of the past, all thought of the future, and the day went merrily on, hour after hour witnessing their animated enjoyment.

It was at last sunset. They had been led on to a considerable distance from Great Felsberg; and the growing gloom of the forest warned them that it was time to seek the castle, where Steinbach had promised to pass the night. An end was therefore put to the sports. The tired, yet reluctant dogs, were called off and coupled, and the prickers, huntsmen, and grooms ordered by the count to accompany the slow movements of the pack, while he and his followers, advancing the fresh horses which had been till then led for the purpose, set off together at full speed by the nearest homeward track.

Steinbach, whose horse was fiery and instinctively anxious to reach the home-stall, had advanced somewhat a-head of Count Karl, when they reached a rather narrow and precipitous pass. The latter reined in his steed, to descend the broken road with greater safety. His friend, less cautious, or hurried on by the impatience of the animal, galloped rapidly down the craggy way. In a few minutes the count reached

the bottom of the rising ground, and entering again into the level forest-track, was startled by the sound of a voice, which he scarcely recognised for that of Steinbach, uttering hoarse cries for help, while the trampling of a horse's hoofs seemed to say that some struggle was going on.

Count Karl pressed forward, but what was his horror on observing his friend's furious steed galloping back past him, riderless — and, a few paces more in advance, that dear loved friend himself, in whose destiny his own seemed wound up, hanging in the centre of the road, his neck twisted and entangled in one of the pigeon nets, his legs and arms wildly thrown about in the fierce struggle with fate; while above him and at each side the fluttering birds flapped their wings in the meshes, or were freed by his random clutchings; and the branches which formed the double gallows from which he hung, bent, creaked, and shook their seared foliage aloft?

The pang of agony that shot through Count Karl was more than may be imagined, and almost more than man might bear. It was not mere horror for the dreadful fate of another, and *that* is terrible to a feeling heart, but it was also the certain conviction of his own awful destiny brought home with an electric pang, at sight of this frightful fulfilment of the second portion of the prophecy. He was for a moment — and at such a time a moment was worth an age — unnerved, unmanned. He had no power of motion or of thought. The gurgling sound of strangulation, the audible heavings of the breast, and frantic struggles, all told that his friend was at almost the latest gasp — yet Count Karl stirred not — but gazed in horror and stupefaction, as though his share of the curse had already come.

And well might he so believe! — for in an instant more, a woman, coarsely clad, with active bound and agitated looks, and an unclasped knife in her hand, sprang into the road from the covert of the wood. This seemed indeed the evident personification of his doom. Instinct rather than reason — the love of life rather than the dread of danger — man's most mighty impulse — now re-assumed its sway — and the bold hunter of the forest, he who would have confronted peril in a thousand other forms, fled in disgrace and terror, recreant to his friend, his sex, and his very nature!

It would be hard to tell the wild imaginings that possessed

him as he fled, the vagrant riot (as the legend expresses it) of his debauched and inebriated brain. The frightful figure of the struggling Steinbach, and the water-bloated carcass of Von Linz, were for ever before his eyes ; and to these were added, when he reached the cross-roads, the dangling skeletons of the gibbeted murderers, with the fiend who carried off his prey from the polluted spot.

This was a fearful combination of horrid fancies, goading and lashing on the almost phrensiéd mind of Count Karl towards the goal of utter despair. He reached his castle in the gloom of night ; and scarcely speaking or looking at his astonished domestics, he rushed to his own apartment and flung himself into the nearest chair. All wondered at the non-appearance of Baron Steinbach, of whom the huntsmen could give no account. Strange notions filled the minds of the servants. Count Karl was a feudal lord, and ran no risk of intrusion from his vassal attendants. No one of the household questioned or approached him. The repast prepared for his refreshment lay untouched in the eating-hall. He was left to the most hideous of solitudes, — that which is peopled by the dark phantasms of incipient phrensy.

As long as his lamp was alight he was heard at times pacing up and down his sleeping-chamber ; and again long intervals occurred of silence, now and then faintly broken by some murmured and incoherent words. Darkness was at length established in the room. One by one the household retired ; and Count Karl himself, worn out by the intensity of suffering, sank on his bed and lay down with his desolateness to toss about in waking agony, or sleep in that which is still more terrible.

All the wild fancies of the last few hours were then multiplied in every form. Preposterous scenes of horror danced confusedly before him. Every object that imagination could create, in connexion with those whose actual being was so cruelly stamped on his mind, were now around, above, beside him, in that unfathomable mood of mingled fact and fiction which had so wholly possessed him.

One leading object — one key-stone to the arch of agony which spanned his mind — was ever before him. A woman's hand, armed at all times, but in ever-shifting varieties, with some frightful instrument of death, seemed to mix in the

crowd of fantastic images, hovering over his head, directed against his breast, or grasping his full and choking throat.

At length — and Count Karl scarcely knew whether he was awake or slept the while — he thought the actual creeping touch of human fingers passed across his face. His whole frame was cramped and his blood curdled. The bed-covering rose and fell like the surface of troubled waters, from the heavings of his breast as his heart throbbed and he panted in excess of terror.

The fit passed over. Again he dozed — slept — dreamt ! Again the distorted visions of fevered agony rushed across his mind ; and again, while thus persecuted with unreal phantasms, the actual touch of mortality came on him. He doubted no more. He could not be deceived. It *was* a hand — not hard and broad and bony, seizing him with manly force — but light and fleshy, such as might grace the form of some soft woman, that now fell gently on his breast, and passing thence to his face, moved to and fro, as if searching out some sensitive and vital spot, in which to plant the poniard which imagination pictured as gleaming in its fellow's grasp.

The sufferer could no more move from this dread consciousness than can the victim of torture break away from the bands and bolts that fasten him to the rack. He lay every moment expecting the blow of death, in that state of forced and fearful resignation which a criminal works himself up to in the few moments that see the fatal axe suspended above his neck.

But this was not long to be endured. Had the hand that now stole across Count Karl's blanched cheek and pressed his panting breast remained thus for another minute, he had probably quite sunk under the appalling torture. But a heavy sigh, which burst involuntarily from him, seemed the signal for its withdrawal. He was again free. The spell seemed removed that had enthralled his feelings ; and the frame that erewhile lay in the torpor of coming death now throbbed and shook in all the desperate energy of recovered vigour. His brain felt a flame — his parched tongue clove to his mouth — his nerves twitched and quivered with fevered force. Again the horrid visions danced their round in his imagination. New forms and new combinations of terror mingled in mazes

more hideous and horrible than ever. He was wrought into a complete aptitude for the final explosion of phrensy, and the match was soon applied to the train.

Again the hand dropped softly on the flushed and fevered face of Count Karl. It was like oil falling upon fire. One pang — one scream — one bound from the bed, with a force that shook the room and rattled every article of furniture in astounding force — and the maniac (for so he was) rushed to the freedom of the open window, beyond which a low balcony hung out in the moonlight air. As he fled, he cast one frantic look behind, and saw indeed a female form, which rushed after him with outstretched arms. He turned away his head — reached the balcony — placed his hands on the balustrade, and vaulting over with the force of fear aiding his active strength, he was in a moment whirling downwards through the air — then dashed to pieces on the craggy sides of the mountain on which the castle was perched.

It needs not to be told that it was Countess Anna who was thus the innocent and agonized cause and witness of her husband's fate. Resolved to give him a surprise, which her heart falsely promised her would be one of delight, she had returned from her visit to Lichtenau, even before the unfortunate count came back to the castle. She gave immediate orders that her return was to be concealed from him. And placing herself in a private closet that communicated with his chamber, she awaited, with the patient playfulness of affection, till he slept. Then, resolved to bring him as she hoped to awaking pleasure, by the gentlest means of surprise, she stole out; and breathless with innocent anxiety, she performed, in a much shorter space of time than it appeared to her half-maddened sufferer, the well-meant but fatal series of manual experiments which brought on so frightful a result.

The legend says nothing of the subsequent adventures of the Countess Anna. But the remains of a little rustic temple near the ruins of the castle of Great Felsburg have borne from remote tradition the title of the Shrine of the Pilgrim Countess; and it is believed to have been erected by the wretched widow in honour of her saint, after the performance of a long and perilous pilgrimage, in penance for her fatal indiscretion.

The morning after Count Karl's dreadful death, Baron

Ludwig of Steinbach was brought to the castle, alive and quite recovered, but still somewhat weak, and not a little frightened at the almost miraculous escape he had from strangulation. The woman who so providentially arrived on the spot of his accident, in time to cut him down and save him by her careful attendance during the night, was the wife of a woodcutter, and was employed in packing up and trimming the faggots of her husband's felling, when the struggles and cries of the half-hanged baron brought her to his relief.

Baron Steinbach was killed sixteen years afterwards, in an action against a party of imperial troops, and left a large family to inherit and hand down his name and honours.

About the same period a poor brother of the order St. Benedict died, in the odour of sanctity, in the abbey of that order at Bingen. He had been nearly twenty years an inmate of that holy house, and had been remarkable for his austerities, voluntary penances, and frequent flagellations. His name he never divulged till the day of his death. He then declared it to be Ulric Von Linz, and begged the prayers of the brotherhood for his soul, weighed down by the weight of many sins, particularly that of the murder of his wife Eleanor in a fit of jealousy, two days before he entered the abbey as a novice.

Thus we have the result of the Three Foretellings. One of the random prophecies was fulfilled, solely from the victim's belief in the accomplishment of the others. And what a deep lesson does it read to us, of the weakness of the human mind, and the gigantic power which superstition holds over it !

A YEAR OF JOY.

A LEGEND OF THE TWELFTH CENTURY.

WHILE the celebrated Frederick Barbarossa, afterwards Emperor of Germany, was yet a youth, and his uncle, Conrad, the Duke of Swabia, still living, he was the hero of a little tale of love, so wondrously pure in its nature, as to throw a reproach on stories of periods more refined, and to convince us that that master passion was not dependent on the progress of civilisation for its most genuine and delicate development.

The young knight of Hohenstauffen, as Frederick was then called, possessed many of the qualities of heroism; and even in his earliest youth he gave proofs of the character which afterwards became so celebrated. But historians care little to seek for or to dwell on the romantic episodes of early life, which give a truer insight into the dispositions of public men than those glaring actions either of virtue or vice, which, instead of being illustrative of the natural character, most commonly proceed from influences out of its control.

Among the loveliest of the daughters of the Duke of Swabia's vassals, was Gela, whose father was but a serf, and she, like the other maidens of her station, exposed of course to all the temptations by which the son of her feudal lord might choose to assail her. Frederick heard of her beauty, and with the natural ardour of youth and the usual motives of a feudal knight, he went expressly from the heart of his uncle's state to its confines, which extended to the Rhine, and there, in the town of Muhlburg, he waited an opportunity to gratify his excited curiosity.

After several ineffectual attempts, which but inflamed his wishes and produced that preparatory excitement so favourable to one who was determined to be enamoured to a certain point, the young knight at last succeeded in getting a view of the

unsuspecting maiden, without letting her know the rank of her observer; for in the romantic mood he resolved to encourage, he was determined that no influence but that of his personal persuasion should induce Gela to listen to his suit.

It was passing under an arcade that connected the principal square of the town with the church where the innocent girl regularly repaired to her devotion, that Frederick first met her, and was told by the dependant, whom he had taken as a pilot on this voyage of discovery, that he now gazed on the celebrated beauty of Muhlburg. Struck with admiration, and already before he saw her half in love, the looks of Frederick did not fail to express all the ardour of his feelings. Gela's eye caught the looks so intently following her movements and so fixed upon her face. She blushed deeply, and betrayed a consciousness—and as Frederick thought a sympathy—which vanity whispered him she would not have accorded so promptly to a common admirer. He followed her into the church, placed himself near her so as to have a full view of her beauty, and during the time of service he thought little of the holy office celebrated by priest, but much, very much, of the lovely votary who silently offered up her prayers to Heaven.

Satisfied as to the real charms of the reputed beauty, he now began to devise the best means of securing them to himself; and having ascertained the place where Gela lived, he entered into a consultation with Rudolf, the devoted attendant who was his confidant in this adventure.

"Oh, Rudolf! she is indeed lovely—too lovely for her low rank in life—and far too lovely for my happiness, unless she can be mine."

"Why not, my gracious lord? Myself and your two horse-grooms can drag her from her father's and brother's arms this very night."

"Forbid it, saints of heaven!"

"Count Frederick, you were not so scrupulous when Gertrude of Arnheim was carried to your bower."

"Rudolf, thy reproach is scarcely just. She whom you name was more than half won when she was led from her father's cottage. She wore not the innocent smile of Gela!"

"Well, then, my master, if force revolts you, try persuasion. A heavy purse of gold secured you the possession of Anne of Ebersdorf."

"There is no sordid or selfish expression in Gela's open looks, Rudolf. She is not to be bought and sold!"

"Abandon the pursuit, then, good my lord! I know no other means of obtaining possession of the prize except by purchase or force."

"I do, though, Rudolf; and Gela shall be mine by other means, or not at all. Conquest shall make her mine! Love shall be the sole weapon; nor shall gold corrupt, any more than violence undo her. I swear to win her to my arms by love alone, or to renounce her quite; to make her share my passion, not to submit to it!"

"Nay then, count, if this romantic notion has possessed you, my presence can be but of more harm than help!"

"I think so, too, Rudolf, and I wish you to leave me to myself. Hasten back to court,—say nought of me,—you know not where I am nor on what pursuit. Remember! you will not betray me?"

"From this hour no mortal shall know more of your plans, my noble master, than my tongue has already told."

"Enough, good Rudolf, be staunch and secret!"

And Rudolf was so. He told no more, — but he had already told enough to mar the amorous and romantic plan of his young master, not with a treacherous design, but from over excess of zeal.

The father of Gela was a husbandman in easy circumstances, tilling his ground, greatly to the benefit of the lord of the soil, and a little to his own. He was a serf it is true, but not quite a slave; and his children, though obliged like all their class to work for their own support, were not absolutely forced to toil for a bare existence. Even in those days, when social life knew but few shades, and extremes were almost touching, there were still gradations between the higher and the very lower ranks. Gela's father stood somewhere — it would be hard to exactly classify his place — but somewhere between his liege lord and the mere drudge of the farm-yard. His sons and daughters had the benefit of his comparative refinement; but one of them bore that inherent stamp of natural grace, that patent of superiority to her station, an instance of which is even now remarkable, but *then* was marvellous. That one was Gela.

Besides her there were another daughter and several sons. The girl was always ailing, and at times almost bed-ridden. Gela was her nurse; and she acted almost the part of a mother

to her brothers, though they were older than she, for her father was a widower, and on her had fallen all the domestic cares and household management for all. The house which this family inhabited was at some short distance from the town, on the banks of the Rhiné, surrounded by vineyards and commanding a view of the broad river, the very habit of gazing on which might give to the beholders a reflected character of depth, expanse, and dignity.

This is not the place to examine the question of moral effects produced by the influences of scenery on the mind. That mountaineers and sailors are susceptible of strong impressions from constant intercourse with nature's wild grandeur, is admitted. If so, why doubt an analogous sympathy with objects of lesser proportions? If the boor of the Dutch swamps be dull and heavy, or the shepherd of the sandy deserts of Gascony no livelier than the flock he guards, why not suppose the dwellers on the Rhine to catch their placid, serious, regular tone of character from the grand object of external nature, that not even a casual passenger may gaze on without a deep, calm flow of feeling stealing on his soul? Be the cause what it might, such was the habitual tone of Gela's well-regulated mind. Her heart and her brain were in constant unison. Feeling and reflection never jarred. No struggle was kept up between sense and sensibility. The whole was harmony, and she its living type.

It was at the close of a day of usual labour followed by repose, that the whole family I have described were sitting at their evening meal in front of their dwelling. Gela was beside her sick sister, her constant post; and the common, perhaps the common-place, round of social converse was going on when a young stranger in a hunting dress and on foot appeared before the party. His dogs at his heel appeared, no more than himself, fatigued, yet he told a story of his having lost his horse in the chase, and he asked hospitality and lodging for the night.

The prepossessing air of the stranger would have no doubt procured a hearty assent from the father of the family, even if hospitality had not been a law of the age of chivalry. A cheerful acquiescence and a cordial invitation to partake of the frugal repast were instantly given by the father, and confirmed by all the children, save one. It was not the invalid who

silently hung her head, and hid her blushing cheeks, as the sportsman seemed to wait anxiously for one invitation more to complete the general welcome. After a moment's pause he fixed his looks on Gela, and asked, in a tone which she thought seemed to blend something of command with supplication, "And will not you, fair maiden, join your voice to the other biddings? Is the tired stranger unwelcome to you alone? Do you fear to give shelter to the wayfarer?"

"You are welcome to the shelter of my father's house, Sir Stranger. Hospitality never stops to take counsel from discretion—nor do we fear to do a kind action, even though there were some risk in it."

Gela was hurried to make this reply by the somewhat dissatisfied looks of her father and brothers, which rather seemed to reproach the previous want of courtesy, so complained of by the stranger.

"If there be risk, it is all on my side, fair Gela," said the stranger, in a half whisper, and sitting down beside the blushing girl with a self-command which was however softened by a tinge of timidity. So it is, that even incipient love teaches diffidence to the high and lordly. When the passion is full grown, its first fruit is humility.

And it was not long before the admiration of Count Frederick ripened into the most powerful attachment for Gela. Day after day he found his way to her father's house; and having once established a footing of acquaintanceship there, he was at every new visit received with new pleasure. Unknown in that part of the country, the good serfs little thought who it was they entertained, and his modest bearing only allowed them to believe that he was some young man of gentle blood, amusing himself, as he asserted, with the sports which abounded in that neighbourhood. His numerous presents of game, and his constant appearance in the accoutrements of the chase, gave proofs in support of the character he assumed, and it was never questioned openly by any of the family.

Franz Richter, for such was the name he assumed, was quickly a great favourite with his new friends—at least with those of the good peasants who seemed inclined to admit him to the familiarity of that term. But in the manner of Gela there was a constant reserve which would have driven Frederick to despair, had not evident pleasure in his society as constantly struggled through it. He saw that he had, even in

despite of all her prudence, her modesty, and an evident, yet unpremeditated air of respect, whenever she listened to or addressed him, gained great ground in her regard; and once or twice, when seizing some fair occasion, he pressed on her with unwonted warmth of language, she blushed and sighed, and gave such token of sympathy that he believed for a moment all that his most excited hopes suggested.

But Gela as instantly recovered from these lapses of the heart. She started back as if affrighted at the discovery of her danger, and her looks seemed to carry reproach to her tempter and remorse for herself.

Thus three weeks rapidly passed by. Count Frederick was in no mood to reckon time nor calculate dangers. Yet the long absence from his father's court, and the chances of his being recognised, at intervals struck forcibly upon his thoughts, and finally he heard the warning. He felt it necessary to bring to a termination this romantic freak. He had never before devoted a tithe of the time to complete a conquest. The triumphs of the great over the lowly are, alas! too often ready made. Yet there was something so delightful in this new method of love-making, and in the exquisite suspense it entailed on the lover, that he shrunk back at the notion of success. Strange perversion of feeling! Strange anomaly of sensation! Yet, who has not felt it?

While thus lingering in the double influence of his passion, he one evening bent his way to his accustomed haunt, and his road lay through one of those secluded little glens which run up in so many places from the river between two shadowing and wood-covered hills. Scarcely had he entered this solitude, when he saw a female figure gathering herbs by the side of the little stream that rippled through the glen. It was Gela. Frederick was soon by her side. He offered to assist in her task of collecting medicinal simples for the use of her sick sister. She consented, and for some time they continued their task silently, and as if neither knew exactly how to finish the work, and had forgotten how it began. At length, as though a sudden inspiration of courage had darted from on high into Frederick's heart, he paused, looked tenderly on the lovely girl by whose side he stood, took her hand, pressed it to his heart, and murmured "Dear, dear Gela! I love you!"

The words were simple, the sentiment obvious; yet how

powerful their effect? All the eloquence of language, all the arguments of sophistry, could never produce as much. Gela was utterly overwhelmed by this avowal, although she had been less than woman had she not previously observed and understood the sentiment, and the symptoms which betrayed its existence. But instead of the rapture which the words and looks of her lover might be supposed to create, her only sensation was terror—terror arising from many causes, for her own honour and the safety, perhaps the lives, of those most dear to her. No sooner did Frederick's words fall on her ear, than she instantly dropped on her knees before him, and raising her clasped hands, she exclaimed, in an accent that thrilled his heart with surprise and sorrow, "Oh! forgive me! forgive me! I am greatly guilty—but you will not refuse mercy."

"Mercy! Forgive you, Gela?" cried Count Frederick, in amaze, and raising her from the ground; "I cannot comprehend this—'tis for me to seek *your* pity, as I ask your love—for me to prostrate myself before you, beautiful and virtuous as you are—my fate is in your hands; tell me that you admit my passion—that you return it—or you drive me to despair!"

"Oh, spare me this mockery—'tis too cruel! Is it not enough that my treacherous heart has led me to listen to the seductions of your influence? I am punished sufficiently by the consciousness of my presumption!"

"What language is this? What mean you, Gela? Presumption! in listening to—or, could I but hope it from these vague words,—in returning, the love of Franz Richter?"

"No, I can no longer act a part of vile hypocrisy—I know you but too well! Oh! Count Frederick, forgive, and spare me!"

"Ha! you know me? Rudolf has then betrayed me?"

"Say not betrayed—he warned me who you were, to forward, not to thwart your views—and I, criminal and weak, instead of flying and hiding myself from the danger of your love, have risked my own, my dear father's, my brothers' safety, in spite of this warning! But spare me, noble count! at least have pity for the weakness which yielded to attractions that overcame the sense of peril which they excited!"

"Say then, Gela, oh! say it and seal my happiness, that despite your dread of my station and my power, which bade

you to hate, you still loved me for myself alone — say but that you love me !”

Gela had just said she would not play the hypocrite, in one sense — she *could* not, in another. She yielded to the count's embrace, dropped her head on his shoulder, and burst into tears.

The incoherent and impassioned phrases in which the lover expressed his triumph may be guessed — they are not fit to be told. For, though chaste and pure, such as break from even the most libertine in the first ecstatic moments of discovery, these genuine outbursts of the heart would be but ludicrous in repetition, though nearly sublime in utterance. Gela's first words were — “ And you will not drag me from my father's protection — you will not plunge us all in sorrow and ruin — you will spare as well as pardon me ? ”

“ May the saints of heaven bear witness, and punish or reward me as I am false or true to my oath ! I never will do a deed or breathe a thought that can bring harm to you or yours — but will love you ever as now, in purity and honour ! Oh, doubt me not, Gela ! nor break the spell of delight in which I am bound — give me your whole heart in trust and confidence — if you cannot speak it, *look*, at least, your confidence and your love ! ”

Much more was said and *looked* in this short meeting than tradition has told or fancy cares to imagine. The result was an agreement that the lovers should meet the next morning again — not however in the same place, for Gela, recalled to a full sense of her danger by the ardent advances of the young count, positively refused her consent to make this perilous glen the place of rendezvous. That which she fixed on was the church of the village close by, and the hour that of the celebration of mass. “ Impious and profligate ! ” may rise to the lips of the harsh votary of cant. Wait patiently, good hypocrite, and you shall be better able to judge !

The lovers met the next morning, we need not say *punctually*. Frederick never paid so little attention to his prayers. Gela never prayed so devoutly. His desires were at the moment all earthly ; her hopes were wholly fixed on heaven. The service over, and the rustic congregation dispersed, the lovers soon found means to be again alone in one of the shady walks of the neighbouring wood. Frederick, recovered from the

first effects of his delight, had somewhat reproached himself for the little advantage he had taken of his triumph. And he now hoped rapidly to recover and improve on the time he had lost. He therefore returned to the subject of the preceding evening with all the ardour of youth and hope; but Gela suddenly interrupted him, and placing herself upon a mossy bank, she invited him to sit beside her, and then with a calm but deeply affecting tone, she said, "Count Frederick, I must, in atonement for the feelings I too clearly betrayed yester-even, explain the decision which a night's reflection has confirmed. We met this morning almost at the altar's foot. I fixed on that holy place that you might be a witness to the vow I solemnly made to Heaven. I there *swore* never after this day to see you without ample witnesses — and, oh! let me add, without risking your contempt — never, after the avowal which escaped me in a moment of surprised agitation, never to listen to words of love from other lips than yours! That was the solemn pledge which you saw me ere while make to Heaven, and as I keep it, so Heaven help me!"

"See me without witnesses, Gela! And do you then so soon begin to doubt my sworn engagement?"

"No. I believe it — would risk my life and that of all most dear to me on your honour. It is not you I fear — but myself! Too deeply have I already erred. My self-confidence is gone for ever. But if you will consent to make me undergo a not too long enduring penance, and at the same time make it one of joy, you will come, on every sabbath for a year from this day, to this church, and watch me as I offer up my prayers for your happiness and greatness — and at the end of each new time of service grant me one look, one smile, to tell me you approve my task, and cheer me on in its performance."

The passions of youth are all composed of impulses sudden, vigorous, and at times irresistible. It is thus that so many strange and fanciful results take place, so opposite to every calculation of probability or prudence. Who could have imagined that the young, the proud, the powerful knight of Hohenstauffen would have listened to without a smile, much less acceded and sworn to fulfil, a proposal so torturing to his excited hopes, so foreign to his prompt, impatient character, and so attended with almost insurmountable difficulties? Yet such

was his conduct. He agreed to Gela's proposal ; and while she thus secured to herself the delight of seeing him and receiving weekly proof of his affection and her own influence over him, she compounded for the dangerous indulgence by the reflection that malignity itself could not misrepresent the nature of their connection, and that Heaven would surely smile upon the purity of her conduct.

And thus for a whole year did this unparalleled scene of love go on. Frederick, overcoming every obstacle, contrived at the close of every week to snatch one day and night, in all seasons and from all other pursuits, to ride league after league, unattended and unknown, from nearly one extremity of his uncle's territories to the other ; and then having regularly seen his beloved mistress in their holy place of rendezvous, exchanged a few looks and smiles — for which she had stipulated — and occasionally conversed awhile, in the presence of the good family, with her for whom he was thus preparing the sacrifice of all that might be supposed to influence a man of his age and not totally above the spirit of his time. Witnessing the extreme purity of feeling which animated this being so superior to all around her, he could not resist the influence he so admired, and he paid the sincerest homage to virtue, not merely in adoring, but by adopting it.

And now the year of happiness was nearly expired ; and Duke Conrad being about to set out for Palestine with the other Christian chieftains of the empire, Gela recalled Frederick to the high duty which summoned him to attend his father on the crusade. Startled at first, on finding her an advocate for a separation, the anticipation of which almost rent his heart, he could not resist the dread that her love was only of that vague and vapoury kind which derives its source in fancy rather than feeling, but which has no sympathy with those human desires that were meant to give force and fervour to mortal passion.

"Oh ! Gela," cried he, in the bitter disappointment of this fear, "if your love is but ideal—if you worship an abstract notion of which I am but the type—if it is not me, in my bodily form, that controls and commands your attachment, I may as well die at once ; my memory will serve you for an object, though this frame may moulder in the grave ; for if you can urge my absence for a year, you could surely bear it for a life !"

A passionate burst of tears was the first answer to this speech ; and they were followed by a train of reasoning so clear, so true, and so convincing, as would have done honour to the most elevated princess to whose hand the Count of Hohenstauffen might have aspired. Coming as they did from the daughter of a serf, their effect was a thousand-fold greater. And while Frederick gazed and listened on the wonderful union of beauty and wisdom from whom he was about to tear himself, perhaps for ever, he was lost in grateful admiration of her who could sacrifice her best hopes of happiness and her highest of ambition, for the furtherance of his honour and his fame.

Count Frederick assumed the cross, and hastened to the Holy Wars ; nor did his conduct for a long period of service belie his noble lineage or his own reputation. After nearly two years of hard-earned honour, he prepared to return to Swabia, and claim the hereditary rights to which his uncle's death entitled him. Mingled with all the calls of pride and the loud acclamations of glory, one still small whisper made itself heard in the young duke's heart. Love, which for awhile had been subdued by the clang of arms and the shouts of ambition, now resumed its gentle, yet powerful inspiration ; and he hastened to the scene of his former stolen delight and honourable self-restraint, his bosom throbbing high in the ardent hope of at length obtaining possession, as a tribute to his constant affection, of what all the blandishments of wealth, and rank, and power would have failed to purchase.

He rode up to the well-remembered cottage, in the old guise of Franz Richter, the sportsman. He was received by the father and brothers of Gela. But before he could ask the question that sprang from his heart to his lips, he saw that she was absent. His lips quivered and his heart sunk, and the question could not find utterance. But they saw and read his emotion truly ; and they soon told him what he so longed to know, but could not ask.

Gela, almost worn out with the intense ardour of her feelings, and unable to support in secret the passion which consumed her, had resolved to enter into a convent not far distant, and had actually taken the veil ; never betraying to her family the rank of her lover, but avowing her love, and declaring that insuperable obstacles existed towards the possibility of

its ever terminating in a way consistent with her honour or happiness.

The duke, almost frantic at this news, avowed who he was, called on the father and brothers to aid him for their own as well as Gela's sake in tearing her from the sanctuary that interposed its walls between her and his affection, promising to lavish on them honours, distinctions, and riches, more than were possessed by the proudest nobles of the state. These poor serfs, not knowing the true meaning of honour, nor the real value of rank, dazzled by the promises of the duke and frightened by his violence, consented to his last proposal, and without fixed plan or settled purpose, they led him immediately towards the convent where Gela was immured.

Nearly arrived at the holy house, a procession met them on the path. It was a burial train, chanting hymns of mourning prayers for the repose of an innocent sister's soul. It was Gela, who was thus carried to her early grave. Consumption had fixed in her fair and too sensitive bosom, and like the canker in the rose-bud, destroyed the flower ere it fully bloomed or blossomed.

Duke Frederick's anguish was keen and lasting. It was long before he listened to condolence, and then only from the sister who received Gela's last words:—a blessing on her lover, and an assurance that suffering and death themselves were a thousand-fold repaid by the remembrance of her one delightful Year of Joy.

The town of Gelahausen, built on the spot where the innocent girl was buried, was long and is still, under a modification of the same name, a lasting testimony of the better feelings in the character of Frederick Barbarossa.

THE
LADY OF THE COLD KISSES.

A LEGEND OF THE YEAR 1200.

OF all the valleys whose central rivulets run tributary to the Rhine, there is none more remarkable for its picturesque and isolated beauty than that of Hammerstein. Few travellers who pass through it fail to ask the name and history of the large building which, with outspread wings and vast body, seems quietly to repose by the road side. It is now a manufactory; formerly it was the Abbey of Rosebach, but it was commonly known by the name of *Teufel's Haus* (the Devil's House) in consequence of the story of which it was the site.

In olden times the forest, which even now nearly covers the whole mountain behind, spread down into the plain and close to the abbey walls; while numerous avenues, cut through it in every direction, allowed the voluptuous monks to gaze unobstructed on the verdant valley which loses itself in the broad bosom of the Rhine. The limpid waters of the rivulet which now flows clearly along, as nature meant it, to offer homage to the sovereign stream, were in those days twisted and turned by sundry contrivances, to swell the ponds in which the good fathers fattened the fish that was eventually to fatten them. These ponds are now dried up; but in the good old times we speak of, their stagnant bosoms often bore, from morn till night, many a little boat, on the soft cushions and under the painted canopies of which the lazy anglers of the abbey threw out their lines, of a summer's day.

The Abbey of Rosebach combined all the reality of those secluded delights which the dreams of the Epicurean conjure up; a retreat where, far from the cares of life and the fatigues of the world, a votary of idle pleasure might draw out his

listless existence. The wealth of the brotherhood was on every side evident, in the internal as well as the external aspect of things. Cellar and larder well stored, spoke sufficiently to the good taste and good cheer of the community. The costume of the monks was of white stuff of a fine and silky texture, and of exquisite cleanliness. Their hair hung down in long loose curls on their black scapulars, and the elegance of their sandals has passed into a proverb. Grieved I am, for the honour of monachism, to record that their licentiousness was scarcely less a by-word.

It was one sultry night towards autumn in the year 1569 that a young man, wrapped up almost to suffocation in the folds of a large black cloak, cautiously approached the walls of the abbey, and when safely under the shade they threw out on the lawn, he crept slowly along to a point that marked the bounds of the dormitory. Arrived there, and looking up to a little projecting window of the tower, he gave out a suppressed cough. Suddenly at this sound a bald head was popped out of the window, and a rope ladder immediately dropped down, suspended from and fastened carefully above. The young man sprang up with an accustomed step, and balancing himself from time to time on his vacillating road, he was received in the open arms of two half-naked members of the brotherhood, who helped him in at the window, and then began to enter actively into a whispered conversation, in which he performed the chief part.

The young monk, for his calling was betrayed by the mixture of sacred and secular in his costume, soon entered deeply into the recital of some interesting adventure, in which the soft name of a woman was certainly mixed, and which vividly excited the feelings of the listeners, as was testified by the smothered sighs and other sympathising symptoms which escaped them from time to time. At length the triumvirate separated for their several cells.

When the young monk was alone, he threw himself upon his bed; but though it was one on which a minister of state or his crowned master might have found repose for their harassed minds, its possessor could not sleep. Agitated and tormented, by recollections of the past or anticipations of the future, he tossed and tumbled, invoked his patron saint, or repeated aves and paternosters without end, and to no end. His eyes, though

closed, could not shut out the scenes of memory or the visions of fancy. In vain he started up at times, bathed his hot brow with water, or thrust his flushed face into the night air that now played freshly on the window. He found that he was doomed inevitably to a sleepless night—which had perhaps been less intolerable, had it not also been one of solitude.

In this dilemma he valiantly determined to kill the enemy he could not hide from. So striking light by means of his flint and steel, he lighted the thickly-twisted wick that floated in an earthen bowl of oil suspended from the ceiling close to his head, and seating himself at his table, he opened a thick manuscript which had been lent to him by the abbot from his private library that very morning, the parchment of which was ornamented and emblazoned with gold and colours of the most vivid varieties. He opened the book without design; and began to read, without any attention at first, but gradually with an increasing, and at last with a breathless interest, the following legend of the formation of the Abbey of Rosebach.

“CHRISTIAN READER,

“Much doth it behove you to read and ponder on attentively this true history, if you would duly know when and how his Highness Count Otto of Reuss-Marlinberg, Lord of Hammerstein, after having long struggled with his bishop, as his impious ancestors had done before him, after having still longer followed the foul ways of sordid interest and base selfishness, after having weighed what was just and was unjust in the balance of his desires, — in which the just too commonly kicked the beam, — after having scoffed at conscience and held penance in scorn, was at length struck all at once with deep compunction for his manifold crimes. After that you shall behold how and wherefore he put the glory of God in the front of all his movements, and took all the churches and hospitals of the circle into his special care, and how he became as honoured and revered by all the servants and followers of our holy religion, as he was before detested, and abhorred, and hated.

“But, reader, you must know that his Highness Count Otto of Reuss-Marlinberg possessed on the very spot where now stands the Abbey of Rosebach a strong castle, with four round towers and thick ramparts, all manned and guarded by archers

and men-at-arms, to the full as vicious and cruel as was in those days their lord and master.

“ The wickedest among them all, master or men, was an old squire whom no Christian eyes could look on without terror, and of which, to speak truly, he could almost as little bear the looks. In *his* eyes there was an expression that the hand of a Christian could not well describe unless with a pen dipped in some devilish ink, which we Karl Von Hanz, brother of this holy Abbey of Rosebach, possess not—blessed be to St. Peter, patron of the same ! The fiery and copper-coloured tints of his weather-beaten skin made him look like a malefactor who had escaped from the faggots, ere the executioner had burned him quite ; or, perhaps, rather like a fiend sent out half scorched from the flames of a hotter fire. This man or demon, or man-demon, or man-devil, boasted of having fought in the holy land, and of having caught his vile complexion under the burning skies where the Redeemer of the world died for the sins of men.

“ But if his body, indeed, bore arms for a sacred cause, it did little good for his soul ; for old Riquenbach (so was he called) dealt out lustily curses and abuse against all the saints of heaven, without excepting even (may pardon be granted me for telling again the like !)—without even excepting the Holy Virgin herself, the immediate source of all earthly good.

“ Now, in spite of all these wicked ways, in which we have omitted,—not willing to lean too heavy on a fallen sinner,—drunkenness, pillaging, and ferocity, this Riquenbach had ingratiated himself greatly into the favour of his libertine young lord, Otto of Reuss-Marlinberg. 'Tis true that he employed all the tricks and cunning of his old experience to pander to the passions of the young count ; and it must be known that he excelled in the noble art of horse-breaking, and it was enough for him to whisper a few words in a courser's ear, or to throw him a look, to make gentle and manageable the wildest colt in the pastures of Hammerstein.

“ Now there were few things which Count Otto loved better than to prance and caper on a high-mettled palfrey ; but it must be remarked that, aided by the perfidious and damnable advice of old Riquenbach, he found the means of managing the chief part of the damsels of his domains, even though they at first proved restive as the young colts of the pastures.

"It came to pass that one fine morning Count Otto, riding on the high road, met with a young girl, fair to look at and of a lovely presence, who came from a neighbouring village, for the purpose of entering the Convent of Walsdorf not far distant, in fulfilment of the pious intentions with which Heaven had inspired her, of ending her days in the peaceful retirement of the cloister, in perpetual prayer and in the way of grace. Strong in her blessed design, she walked on alone, her beads in her hand, and having already adopted the hood and corresponding costume of a noviciate nun.

"Count Otto of Reuss-Marlinberg took off his cap as he passed her, rather from habit than any feeling of respect or devotion. On seeing this, Riquenbach, who rode beside him, burst into a laugh, and shook so in his saddle that he nearly fell off his horse.

"'By the devil of hell!' said he; 'by his horns and his tail! you have nothing now for it, my young master, than to put on the frock and cowl; and instead of feeling that iron scabbard flapping against your thigh, you should scourge your naked shoulders with the whip-cord of discipline! Fiends and furies! in passing a damsel you doff your cap as if you had met the consecrated chalice—I will pay my respects to her in another style!'

"And turning his horse's head he galloped after the young woman and brought her back to the count. To the questions which they put to her she answered modestly, but without fear, telling the reasons which brought her on the road. Count Otto, the while, began to feel uneasy and impatient, in listening so long to a voice so soft and words so touching, and in gazing on a pair of fine black eyes, which beamed with the voluptuous languor of one longing for repose from the world and its snares. He sighed—and fearing the influence of wicked thoughts, he told the young maiden to follow her course; but while she obeyed this wholesome advice she heard herself called again by Riquenbach.

"'Holloa! fair maid,' cried he, 'you should not think of trusting yourself alone on this dangerous road. Rogues and rascals of all kinds are abroad and might do you harm. As for us you see we are pious folk who take off our caps at the very sight of a novice's hood. Come with us to the castle, close at hand; where you can pass a safe and quiet night, and to-morrow pursue your way.'

"The poor young creature followed this treacherous advice!

"Saints of heaven! Martyrs to the sacred cause! Holy Virgin! What took place in the Castle of Rosebach that night? What dismal moanings, what piercing screams, what cries for help were borne away on the careless winds, while the soldiers, the servitors, and the serfs, in and about the accursed edifice, listened, shuddered, but did not or dared not offer aid!

"At dawn the sounds died away entirely; and before noon a coffin was buried in the dry ditch of the castle, no priest declaring, as was usual in cases of sudden or violent death, the name of the person for whom the *De profundis* was chanted in the chapel.

"It was somewhat less than a year after this cruel adventure, that Count Otto of Reuss-Marlinberg espoused in legitimate union the young and beautiful damsel, Eldegarde of Munch-Benderhausen. The marriage took place at the Castle of Rosebach; and the hour for retiring, after the ceremony and the supper, soon arrived — but very slowly, according to the calculation of the happy bridegroom.

"Left, at length, quite alone with his bride, he advanced towards her with gentle animation, and was about to offer her an embrace of nuptial affection, when he suddenly felt himself held back by the pressure of two icy arms round his neck, while a bosom, marbly-cold leaned against his, and lips which felt like those of an unburied corpse inflicted a succession of frozen kisses on his mouth.

"And then, by the beams of a faint glimmering lamp, love's natural light, he saw the livid-coloured form of a female interposed between him and his terrified bride. He would have believed it a phantom of heated imagination, but he was too clearly convinced of the frightful reality. Her tall and graceful figure, her long brown tresses floating on her neck and shoulders, her bright dark eyes beaming in fearful lustre, her violet lips, her colourless cheeks and bosom, all proved her to be the much abused and murdered novice, risen from the grave to punish his unrepented crime. Holding him still closer at every struggle to escape, she lavished on him kisses that pierced with cold pangs even to his very heart, exclaiming in loathsome tenderness: —

"'Otto, my beloved! It is of me, not her, thou art the husband. For thee, and by thee I lost all my hopes of heaven,

and the Divine Bridegroom my confessor had promised me thee. Thou art mine, beloved Otto ! I only am thy wife !'

"This bride of the charnel vault disappeared not till morning. When the joyous and mischief-looking bridemaids entered to congratulate the young countess, they found her, dressed as they had left her the preceding night, in a swoon, on a couch beside which knelt the scarcely less exhausted count.

"And the following night the spectre returned ; and the night after ; and every succeeding night, with her cold kisses, her icy embrace, and her loathsome words of love.

"And in vain did Count Otto, with the innocent young bride who suffered so severely for his sake, fly from place to place, from castle to castle, from town to town. The Lady of the Cold Kisses followed, or rather accompanied them every where ; and every time that he threw a look of love upon his wife, or held forth his hand to snatch even one pressure from hers, the spectre as surely glided between, repeating some phrase of amorous delight, and sealing it with a kiss that almost turned Count Otto into stone ; while her very beauty of feature and brightness of eye rendered her livid hue more loathsome.

"And assuredly Count Otto of Reuss-Marlinberg, and Eldegarda of Munch-Benderhausen, his spouse, would both have died in consequence of this persecution, if the holy St. Bernard, Abbot of Clairvaux, in Flanders, had not chanced to come on a mission of peace into the unquiet countries of the Rhine.

"This pious saint heard of the miraculous events which have just been told ; and it was not for one so learned and keen-sighted in matters of sin to doubt that for a punishment so terrible there must have been committed some enormous crime. Desirous of establishing happiness in the castle of Rosebach, and of banishing for ever the demon which so embittered its promised joys, St. Bernard sought Count Otto, and found him in a state of wretchedness that would have melted the hardest heart.

" 'There is one way,' said the holy man, after having listened to his confession, 'and but one way of obtaining relief from the persecutions of the evil spirit ;—consecrate yourself to the holy monastic life, abandon the pomps and vanities of the world, cover yourself with the robes of seclusion. The pious austerities of the cloister purge the soul of its wicked thoughts, cleanse the conscience of its iniquities

raise a rampart between the faithful and the fiend, relieve the most poignant mental anguish, and open the way to heaven !’

“ ‘Remember Him,’ continued the saint, with redoubled energy, ‘Remember Him who dwelt on earth in continence, solitude, meditation, and prayer. Embrace the retirement of the cloister, miserable sinner, steeped as you are in guilt, and give thanks to Heaven that affords you a sure way to pardon and happiness. I have told you, and I repeat it, without the cloister there is no chance of Paradise. Embrace then its pure and exquisite enjoyments. Follow up your penances with rigid care, the kingdom of the skies will open to you at length—Satan will be overcome—the head of the serpent shall be bruised !’

“ Eldegarda shuddered and sighed when Count Otto and the saint rejoined her, at the idea of renouncing for ever the love and the society of her husband. Seeing her affliction, the count felt his heart half broken, and he stood silent and immoveable. The old Squire Riquenbach, who had slipped into the chamber, no one present knew how, fixed his piercing and discourteous looks on St. Bernard, and said abruptly, fixing his arms a-kimbo in the most contemptuous way : ‘By the merits of my old blind mule ! you have poured out a rigma-role at which a cat might laugh. Heigh devil ! Ho devil ! as we say in the camp, what would you be at, old bald-pated gossip ? Would you have my noble young master here give up all the joys of life, and leave the harvest of pleasure to your vow-breaking monks, who would laugh while he was praying ? I think I can read the Scriptures, and *quote* them mayhap, as well as you, old mischief-maker, and if you don’t quietly quit the castle and leave this young couple in their natural state of merry making, I may show you a way to lay a meddling monk easier than that which sends a ghost to the Red Sea.’

“ A holy indignation crimsoned the face of the holy man. ‘*Vade retrò, Satanas !*’ cried he, in a tone of enraged authority ; for he had a shrewd suspicion that it was none other but the devil himself that could have the audacity to brave him in this manner. Old Riquenbach began suddenly to tremble in every joint ; and Count Otto and his wife observed myriads of bright sparks fly out from him in marvellous rapidity, and in a way not to be imagined, much less told.

“ ‘*Vade retrò, in nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritûs Sancti !*’ continued the saint, who saw that his words did their work

well. And scarcely had he pronounced the sacred exorcism than a crash as loud as thunder shook the walls of the room ; and when the holy man and his astonished companions looked vainly for the figure of the demon-squire, they only saw a heap of smouldering ashes, and they were all obliged to hold their noses to keep out the pestiferous stink of brimstone which nearly smothered them all.

“ And how was it possible, Christian reader, for Count Otto or his wife to resist the conviction of this prodigy ? It was *not* possible. They obeyed in all things the dictation of St. Bernard.

“ The reader will also see, in the progress of this edifying history, how Count Otto gave up his castle and grounds of ———, that the former might be pulled down and a convent built on its site, and the latter converted into walks for meditation, and shrubberies for ———” (here the young monk who read the MS. could not resist a smile, notwithstanding his state of agitation from the effect of the preceding parts,)—— “ the recreation of the holy men who were henceforward to dwell in the sacred premises.

“ And herein will also be recorded how St. Bernard brought to the place and put in possession of the convent twelve monks of piety and virtue, under the guidance of one Rowland, English by nation, first abbot, who all died in the odour of sanctity. And how the saint performed sundry extraordinary miracles ; among others, his causing to spring up suddenly out of the earth a fountain of clear water to refresh the thirsty labourers who built the convent walls ; and his procuring an iron cart which carried stones, blocks of wood, ready made mortar, and other necessary objects for the construction of the said convent, without being dragged by horses or guided by visible beings. And here be it remarked, that when the building was completed, the before-named cart returned, self-impelled, to the woods, and no living eyes could ever afterwards discover it or any part of it, or any trace of its wheels.

“ And while all these miracles were going on, Count Otto and his afflicted dame, in due obedience to the commands of St. Bernard, prepared to retire severally into the seclusion of the cloister. But the said saint saw, one night in a vision, our Lady of Grace, who commanded him not to separate the married couple, who had as yet known nothing of marriage but its name. They were accordingly allowed to live together

without hindrance, and many years passed over their heads, seeing them give the best example to their children of the fear of God and the most edifying exercise of devotion.

“ For, from the time of the disappearance of the devil, as old Riquenbach was so clearly proved to be, the Lady of the Cold Kisses, who, from first to last, had been nothing more nor less than a fiend conjured up for the purpose of entrapping the young count’s soul, was never more seen by either Count Otto or his countess.

“ But—and sinners, hypocrites, and renegades to the true faith and to your holy engagements, beware! — but—and tremble ye false ones, who renounce your religion, your duty, and your God!—but from time to time it is permitted, by Divine Grace, and for the wise purposes of Heaven, that the aforesaid fiend, or Lady of the Cold Kisses, does return in her already-told semblance upon earth, that is to say, upon the floors of the cells of this consecrated abbey of Rosebach, to hold in her icy embrace, and stifle with her clay-cold kisses, the sinners whom she fills with loathing and affright. And the causes of these her miraculously-permitted visitations are, firstly, whenever the hot blood of a sinful nature mounts higher than the regulated scale of religious duty, and some young brother of the abbey fraternity failing in the vows of chastity which he had sworn to observe——”

At this instant a violent stroke from an invisible substance fell upon the throbbing temples of the palpitating monk, and at the same time his face and neck were covered by a cold shower of liquid, while instant darkness obscured the cell. Terrified beyond the controul of every reasonable conjecture, he fancied himself clasped in the clammy embrace of the Lady of the Cold Kisses, and he roared out lustily for help. The brethren rushed in from the neighbouring cells, and found him pale, trembling, and covered with the oil of his primitively-constructed lamp; while a huge brown bat fluttered about the lights which the brethren carried in their hands.

The young monk smiled, after a painful effort, and alleging as an excuse for his screams, some agitating dreams, he betook himself to bed, his reverend comrades drowsily returning to theirs.

From that period the young monk was rarely observed to wander in the shrubberies at dusk, and was never known to mount a rope-ladder at midnight.

THE DOUBLE DOUBT.

CHAPTER I.

THE romantic stories of the Rhine and its neighbourhood have been frequently transplanted to other sites. Such has been the case relative to the legend on which the following tale is founded ; and I at least perform an act of literary justice in bringing it back to its original scene of action.

Not far from the town of Hirzenach are seen the ruins of two castles, called Liebenstein and Sternfels. They are situate close to each other on elevated and rocky points, covered with vineyards intermixed with wild and stunted shrubs. A deep glen lies between them, and the patches of pasture which here and there dot its sloping sides are separated below by a little stream, that loses itself in the thick wood through which its gurglings come faintly up, where all other sounds are still.

These castles were once inhabited by two chieftains, named Conrad and Eberhard, the first occupying Liebenstein, the latter Sternfels. They were old friends and companions in arms. They had formed through life a marked exception to the general ill-will generated by close neighbourhood in the feudal times. Their castles were not closer than was their friendship, and there were ties of sympathy to bind it more close than is common. They had each married, and both become widowers nearly at the same period, and an only child was left to each to form pledges for the continuance of their close connection. Resolved to devote their whole lives to the care of their children, they totally forsook the boisterous career of chivalry, and consoled themselves for the blessings they had lost in the enjoyment of what was left—the smiles of infancy and the offices of manly regard. The triumphs of the tournament and the glory of the battle field had no further charms for them. They hung their shields, their casques, and coats of mail in the halls where those of their ancestors were already ranged ; and their whole hopes now turned on the prospect of

twining for their offspring a wreath of happiness, as blooming and more lasting than their own, which had too soon withered.

The name of Count Conrad's daughter was Erilda ; that of Count Eberhard's son, Harold. The fathers watched the progress of their mutual affection with anxious eyes. From infancy to adolescence it was just what they could most desire. They observed two young hearts, as it were, bounding high on the enchanted ground of Hope, wandering at will, careless of the path, so as they traced it together, nor dreaming that it was ever to be darkened by even the shadow of disappointment. In their earliest youth they seemed ruled by the same thoughts, and led by the same impulses. Their pastimes and studies were regulated alike. When Harold gave up the sports of mere infancy for those of boyhood, he seemed already warmed by the fire of chivalry. Armed with a paper target and a hazel-rod for a lance, he used to charge boldly against many a field of thistles and poppies, and strew the plain with their scattered flowers, or build up some turf-formed battlement to be razed again by his attacks ; while Erilda stood by, like some lady of the sports, ready to reward with smiles and kisses the champion who did such wonderful deeds for her honour's sake.

The contiguity of the two ~~castles~~ castles may still be seen in their ruins. It was such that the lights from the battlements of the one fell reflected on the arms of the other's sentinels, and they could almost catch the whispered sounds of their mutual words of watch. Within the walls of these castles torture or suffering had no echo. Power was not abused, nor dependence turned to slavery. The neighbouring serfs were proud of their chieftains, because they were not themselves degraded ; and such chieftains, so rare in the records of their barbarous age, were the lights that faintly glimmered on the opening day of civilisation.

Twenty summers had scarcely browned the front of Harold, and developed his strength of body and energy of mind, when he had drunk of the deep stream of glory, for which, as a boy, he had so thirsted. We must pass hurriedly over the events and scenes of his youthful growth, and imagine all those that marked the education of a young aspirant for the honours of chivalry. Nor can we dwell on the joy which filled his bosom when old Count Conrad dubbed him knight

— when the scarf was thrown across his shoulders by the fair hands which worked its embroidered edges — nor on the mutual anguish of parting, when he tore himself from *her* embrace, and rushed to the scene of his first feats of arms.

The desultory combats of those days furnished ample opportunity for the display of martial prowess. Sir Harold gained his full share of fame, and having proved himself a worthy scion of his race, he returned from the turmoil of war to the joys of domestic life. The perils and hardships he had encountered, enabled him to appreciate the happiness now in store for him. He claimed and obtained the only reward he looked for; Erilda became his wife in all the glow of her beauty, all the purity of her affection; and as she gazed on him in the full reality of wedded delight, she only wondered how it were possible that he was indeed her own.

Inhabiting alternately the two castles, this united and happy family possessed the true enjoyments of a common home. On the wedding-day Erilda left her paternal walls, according to custom, to occupy for a while those of her husband and his father. But on this removal from the home of her ancestors, she knew none of the alarms or regrets of those maidens who are borne away, in the fond arms of their husbands, to scenes foreign to all their former tastes and habits. There was no formal display of strange and curious faces watching for her and annoying her on her arrival at her new home. She removed across the little rivulet as though stepping from one path of her accustomed playground to another. The beaming countenances that hailed her arrival were long known and dearly loved. The bridal flowers were culled from her own garden. Her favourite lamb and fawn were browsing the next morning on the lawn over which her lattice opened. As she looked out on the glen, she saw the osiers that she herself had planted by the side of the rivulet. Beyond she saw her own flowers, blooming in the parterre she herself cultivated. As she waved her hand towards them, in the playful salutation of innocent happiness, they seemed to answer from their bending stems; and the matin song that was borne on the soft breezes came from the throats of the feathered choir which was fed by her own hands.

We may well suppose that years flew quickly over a scene like this. Time never rests his wings to dwell with happi-

ness. He only lags and lingers with pain and misery. But how does the imaginative mind long to pause amidst the joys it pictures, shining like the blue spots of a sky which storm-clouds are about to blacken ! How love to see itself reflected in the overflowing fountains, whose sources rise in the holiest sympathies of nature, where fancy flutters like the summer bird that dips his wings in the warmth of some sunny lake !

One daughter was the fresh link in the chain of love which bound the four individuals who formed this family circle. She was called Fréda. She gave a thousand new springs to the feelings of father, mother, and grandsires. The happiness of all seemed complete.

The occupations of those to whom literature was indeed a sealed volume must have been monotonous, and can be scarcely called intellectual. To tell and listen to tales of war, love, and magic, by the blazing fire in winter, or in the shady bowers in summer ; to visit the habitations of the vassals ; to feed the pilgrim, or list to the minstrels at the gate ; to walk on the broad terrace that looked down on the beauties of the Rhine, and hearken to the chimes of the convent bell, or the sounds of Erilda's lute or Harold's manly voice—such was the usual round of their pursuits.

The following was one of their simple and favourite roundelays : —

“ ROUNDELAY.

“ Brightly beams the placid sky ;
Softly smiles the moon on high ;
Sparkling dances every star
That shoots its fairy light afar ;
All above looks blithe and gay —
Let not mortals then below
A single shade of gloom betray,
Reproaches on the Heavens to throw !

II.

“ Nature speaks in simple tones
That modest echo sweetly owns ;
Then let not man's presumptuous lyre
To loftier harmonies aspire —
When friendship's honest vows we breathe
They need not come from gilded bowers ;
And if affection twine the wreath
No matter where she culls the flowers.”

But this long season of delight could not last for ever.

It was at deep midnight that the solemn sounds of a chanted requiem arose in the low vaults of Liebenstein Castle.

Sighs and lamentations mingled with its sad melody. Pale monks were seen by torch-light, and weeping domestics swelled the train of death. It was in the following strains that the dirge gave expression to the general feelings of piety, and honour for him who was gone :—

“ Rest thee in peace, illustrious Son,
 Ennobler of a noble line ;
 The conflict o’er, the battle won,
 The victory is thine !
 Rest, till that day when thy dark tomb
 Re-opening bursts its bounds :
 When, summoning to thy endless doom,
 The last loud trumpet sounds —
 And thy purged soul shall glorious rise,
 A stream of splendour on the skies —
 Rest thee in peace ! ”

And for whom was all this sad pageant performed—the swelling anthem, the passing knell, the stately tapers, the solemn mass ? What noble sinner was mourned so pompously and so sincerely ? The group that stood silently beside the vault, taking no part in these noisy demonstrations of woe, were living but not speaking answers to these questions. The beautiful young woman who wept so bitterly, leaning her blanched cheek on her husband’s shoulder, plainly showed that she mourned a parent’s death, and the bending form of the old warrior by their side, seemed to take, in the deep grave, a last farewell of his former friend and companion in arms. Count Conrad slept with his fathers.

The last service was performed. The household attendants had retired. The officiating monks had wended their way to the neighbouring convent. Count Eberhard, Sir Harold, and Erilda had lain down on their couches ; but sleep had not yet relieved their sorrow on its unavailing watch when the horn, sounded loudly at the castle portal, roused up its surprised inhabitants.

And well may all now start up in alarmed anticipation of some great change in the even tenor of their lives. Well may Erilda dash the tears from her eyes—they were fitting tributes to her present grief, but suit not with that which awaits her. Well may Sir Harold spring from the embrace of beauty and the indulgence of peace. War now claims him as its own.

The impatient courier who had so roused up the castle hastened into the presence of Sir Harold, and delivered him a rescript from the emperor ; then mounting a fresh horse, for

his own had dropped down dead in the court-yard, he galloped off at full speed, to serve the remainder of a batch of imperial summonses on the neighbouring chieftains.

The young knight of Sternfels, thus taken by surprise, felt all the natural ardour of his disposition spring up as though from a slumber of years. The passion for war, the longing for fame, the instinct of loyalty, all acted together; and every ignoble regret was hushed in the clamour of Christian and feudal sophistries, that told him his first duty was to destroy the Turk and aid the emperor.

The speed of the courier, and the promptness of military preparation in those days, were proved by his gazing, within an hour, from a hill four leagues distant, on the faintly distinguished walls of Sternfels; and at the same time seeing the sun-beams glitter on a crowd of helms and spears, which were soon, however, lost in a cloud of dust that rose swelling up, as if proud of the warrior train it enclosed. The foremost of Sir Harold's band was already on its route; and he with the remainder of his required quota was not long behind.

The din of preparation was heard loudly in all quarters. The large bell of the castle sounded the alarm to the vassals whose duty it was to hasten ready armed to that summons. The courts and halls were filled with impatient crowds inquiring the cause of this assembly, and preparing to carry the peremptory orders of the emperor into effect. Squires, pages, archers, men-at-arms, all thronged together, and all soon disappeared. The spacious stables were left empty. The walls of the armoury were bare. In places where the morning light had been reflected back from a martial tapestry of banners, targes, helms, and lances, a broad and cheerless blank met the beams of the noon-tide sun. No longer did groupes of busy idlers pace the courts and ramparts. No songs rose up from sportive voices. The castle maidens were not seen gaily wandering in the garden. Snugly shut up in their several apartments, they wept their departed lovers, or strove to distinguish from the turrets the one dear form, among the parting troops which now fast faded from even the eagle-eye of affection.

This sad and dreary change was so sudden that it appeared to those who gazed on it like the shifting cheatery of a dream.

But one among the rest was so overwhelmed with the stroke that it seemed as if she, who felt the most intensely, had not felt at all. No sigh broke from Erilda's lips; no tears gushed from her eyes; she complained not; she did not cast her looks languishingly around; but stood calm and motionless, as though life itself had left her, with him for whom alone she lived. And it was in vain that her attendants and the good Count Eberhard strove to rouse her from this waking trance. She seemed paralysed beyond the power of revival, until the voice of her infant daughter, calling on her from the cradle where she slept, caused the flood of feeling to rush again through the frame in which it seemed to be extinct. "My child! my child!" cried the now too acutely conscious mother. The infant, affrighted at the wild energy with which she strove to clasp it, shrunk away; and the half frantic Erilda fell beside it, totally exhausted by the shock of returning sensation.

Sir Harold never paused, nor ventured to look back till he reached that hill on which we have said that the imperial courier observed the distant tower of Sternfels. The conflicting feelings of its young lord can be well imagined and could be but ill described. Urged on by all the combinations we have briefly sketched, drawn back by those strong but gentle ties which all may picture, he had to endure a painful struggle. Often was he tempted to throw back one farewell glance on the towers that held all that was really dear to him on earth, but he dared not. He knew that one glance would totally overcome him. He therefore clapped spurs into his courser's sides, and drove him on at a rate which suited the fugitive who fled from his own thoughts. A new and unexpected object soon gave him the most opportune relief, by allowing vent to his feelings in a way which soothed without opposing them.

In the road which he now galloped down so furiously, followed by his favourite squire, who alone witnessed the struggle he had so bravely endured, he discovered a group of mounted men. Foremost among them was his own near kinsman, Rupert of Stalbach, the heir of Sternfels in failure of sons on the part of Harold. He was a brave soldier, of small means, neither wanting nor wishing for more than he possessed; rough and honest, without care, loving his kinsman,

and quite indifferent to the entail, the advantages of which he did not covet. He was older than Harold, who regarded him with that mixed kind of feeling which is not exactly brotherly love nor parental reverence, but partakes somewhat of both. Erilda had always considered Rupert of Stalbach as the type of moral and martial worth. The emperor, with whom he was a great favourite, had given him some local command which added to his scanty income; but he would gladly now have forfeited place, profit, and promotion for the distant harvest of fame which he envied Sir Harold's chance of reaping.

"Well met, Rupert!" cried the latter. "Thou art on the road to Sternfels?"

"Ay, Harold, to give thee a rough blessing on thy expedition, and a rougher curse that I do not share its glorious chances."

"I take thy blessing, my friend, and leave thee still a proud and honourable charge. I go, Rupert, to meet the infidel and uphold the true faith, in the ranks of our liege lord. It may be I have taken a last farewell of my father — my wife — my child ——" A pause, and a nervous pressure, given to his kinsman's outstretched hand, told Sir Harold's emotion.

"While they lament my absence, — or should I fall ——" continued he.

"No more, no more!" exclaimed Von Stalbach, "we must not be unmanned, good cousin. Let this be enough, I swear to you, as a Christian knight, that while I breathe, thy wife shall want no brother, thy sire no son, nor thy child a sire!"

A cordial embrace sealed this pledge and ended the interview. In a little more each party had pursued its different route, and no trace remained of either cavalcade.

CHAPTER II.

IN as short a space of time as could be consumed in the journey, Sir Harold and his gallant troop had joined the rendezvous of the imperial rearguard, and gained the passes of the Hungarian hills, across which his road directly lay towards the Danube, on the banks of which river the emperor had determined to measure his forces with the Turk. The

picturesque varieties of the route from time to time excited the chieftain, and he occasionally broke from his absorbing reveries, to gaze with wonder and admiration on the lovely scenes he traversed.

Often he would push on far before his followers, and meet the rough breeze that gave its wholesome greeting from some mountain top, blowing aside his mantle, sporting in his jet-black plume, and giving to his cheeks the bright glow of health, which too often conceals the canker of sorrow. Sometimes he would stop his horse suddenly on the ledge of a precipice, and, while the trembling animal threw wild glances into the chasm, mark the wild goats bounding securely from crag to crag, or whole herds browsing at leisure on the verge, while their sentries watched on some rocky point, in all the instinct of discipline.

Then would Sir Harold be recalled to more home sensations, by hearing the chorus of some song of the Rhine borne upwards on the breeze, while the singers were seen slow-pacing their way on the rugged paths, the spray-shower dashing from the mountain cascades, and the sunbeams playing on the white foam or glancing from the polished armour. As the squadrons gradually ascended, some were at times to be seen pausing, to let their steeds snatch a refreshing draught from the stream that oozed out of the rocky soil; and when at length the summits were reached, and the riders stretched their stiffened limbs upon the welcome ground, the blown and tired horses robbed the wild animals of the hills of a portion of their scant verdure. It was thus that Sir Harold and his brave companions worked on their tedious, yet not quite unvaried route.

In the meantime, the main body of the imperial army had reached the Danube; and they soon crossed it in great force and spread far into Bulgaria, where the assembling host of the infidels was preparing to meet their advance. Many chieftains of renown, of old families, and acknowledged rank, had joined the emperor on this expedition; but among them all none was more remarkable than one adventurer, whose titles to distinction were not to be traced to any of those common causes which obtain the homage of the vulgar. His name, as he himself gave it out, for no one else could vouch for it, was Rudolf of the Hartz—a wild and vague title, that corresponded with the character and all that was known of the

career of the man. His course of service could not be traced farther back than some five or six years, at which period he had offered himself as a volunteer in one of the terrible domestic quarrels waged between two independent and powerful vassals of the empire. His haughty mien and proud look, though he was but a youth, made many an old soldier shrink from any curious inquiries as to his lineage or connexions. Once, and once only, some comrade, less cautious than the rest, imprudently put a question of the kind, with a sneer of doubt for its accompaniment.

"My name is known," replied the adventurer. "I am Rudolf of the Hartz. Whoever wishes for records of my birth or race must search them on my sword blade. Whoever doubts them ——" but, turning quickly aside, he seemed to check his rising passion, and a blush was seen to pass across his brow. From that day no one made further inquiries, and Rudolf was allowed to rest in mystery, but not in obscurity. Not only his courage, but his many accomplishments forbade the latter being his lot. His tall figure and handsome face prepared the observers to admire his versatile talents. His pencil was skilful at tracing likenesses of objects in nature or of art. He sang well, touched the lute skilfully, and made verses with the fluency and grace of a southern troubadour. Yet, beneath all the semblance of graceful amiability which covered and gave new worth to these attractions, the keen observer might perceive, at times, symptoms of a character the broad reverse of amiable. A hurried and envious flash would break from his dark-fringed lid when any comrade of the battle-field received even deserved applause. And frequently when his friends—as they were called in camp parlance—fell in the fierce contests from which he had the good luck to escape, an ardent and pleased glance lit up his large eyes, and a fiend-like smile curled his lip, as though he felt relieved from the oppression of a weight of rivalry.

When the end of this petty war threw Rudolf out of occupation, his accomplishments were turned to good account, and he started on the paths of peace as a troubadour. With courtly air and lightsome step, singing, sighing, roving, and amorous, he pursued his course. A welcome met him wherever he presented himself,—but curses and reproaches generally followed his departure; for the regrets of confiding love were too commonly the results of his visits. Remorse never seemed

to sting him; and he loved pleasure less for the enjoyment he indulged in than for the mischief it allowed him to perpetrate. But war again burst out, and on a scale proportioned to his growing ambition. The expedition of the emperor opened a new field to every adventurer; and a warrior of his reputation was received into the combined army of Christian chivalry as an acquisition of no common worth.

The army had crossed the Danube; the white tents of the Christian encampment spotted the green plains; and, obscurely seen from the distant cliffs, they looked like sea birds reposing on the bosom of ocean. The palisadoes and trenches were fixed and cut, and the broad banners of the various chieftains gave defiance to the unbelievers. Skirmishes and marauding excursions soon tried the courage and skill of the troops. Reinforcements came on day after day, and all awaited with impatient valour the expected crash of the two armies in decisive conflict. But wherever, in the prelusive conflicts, danger was to be braved or booty gained, Rudolf of the Hartz was foremost.

One evening, after a day of active warfare, the emperor had assembled in his tent the principal leaders of the various forces, — Rudolf among the rest, — to gather their opinions, in a general council, as to the plan of action to be immediately pursued against the now closely approaching enemy. While thus gravely occupied, a cry that sounded like surprise and superstition broke on them from without. All paused; and some rushed to the opening of the tent, to inquire the meaning of the sounds, which were repeated, louder and more near. In a few moments they returned, making way for a captain, who had guarded one of the passes across the river, and now hurried up from its banks, uttering the exclamations which had so surprised the council, and forcing his way to the presence of the emperor.

“Great potentate! noble chieftains!” exclaimed he, throwing himself at the emperor’s feet, “woe and ruin are coming on us fast! The hopes of Europe, the pride of Christendom, are about to be overthrown! Fly, my great liege, oh, fly from this foul land, where magic encircles and must destroy us all! Where demons troop on against us, and walk the waters and the winds! You doubt?” continued the terrified captain, seeing the incredulous and angry looks of the emperor and the

rest. "Go forth, then—see with your own eyes, mighty sir, and ye bold and sceptical chieftains! see the wizard squadron as it comes slowly up from the river's side, having crossed over on rafts, no doubt as immaterial as the forms it seemed to bear over! While leading it onwards, is *he*, the redoubted Rudolf of the Hartz, who stands here a living mortal man, but is there, nevertheless, changed, by some hellish arts of devils' craft, into a bloodless and fleshless fiend!"

Incredulous, yet thrilling with the superstitious misgivings of the age, all hastened out of the tent, the emperor at their head; but those who looked on Rudolf were struck with amaze to see him, always the first on every occasion of real danger, hang back, pale and aghast, at the strange and incoherent announcement of the captain.

"Is he indeed terrified," thought they, "at this wondrous boding of some evil to himself? Or is this some trick of magic, which he has learned to play?"

When they reached the outer opening of the imperial tent, they one and all started back, stunned with astonishment. It was not indeed a spectral delusion that met their sight; no airy nothing that came to scatter dismay among the imaginative heroes of this new crusade. But a tall and gallant warrior, armed at all points, who, having dismounted from his steed, advanced to pay homage to his imperial master. And as he knelt before him, neither the emperor himself nor those who surrounded him could command a word, or utter an exclamation. The stranger chief was so like Rudolf, that sense could scarcely yield credence to the scene. When he spoke some short phrase of dutiful profession to the emperor, it would seem as though a spell had tuned his tongue and voice into sounds the very same as the other so well known to the wondering listeners.

"'Tis Rudolf's self!" cried several.

"See, see, here comes the real Rudolf!" exclaimed others. And Rudolf himself did indeed now advance from the tent, having recovered his self-command, and filled with angry consciousness of having quailed under the influence of fear for the first time in his life. When he caught a full view of the armed warrior before him, he stopped short—a pang of doubt and terror shot through him—and he looked speechlessly on

the as evident resemblance of his own person as though a mirror had hung in the air before him. Nor did the stranger—Sir Harold of Sternfels—throw a less astonished gaze on him, their faces alternately exchanging looks of petrified astonishment.

When the first burst of surprise was over on all sides, and the loud greetings of the whole host had risen up to hail the arrival of Sir Harold with the first of the Rhine country contingents, the tired and still wondering chieftain gave his first attentions to the accommodation of his followers. He next sat down to write a hasty account of his arrival at the camp, to be ready for a homeward-bound courier who was to start the following morning. His brief letter contained only a short statement of his safety, and alluded to the extraordinary resemblance which had caused such amazement to the whole army, and given him sensations quite new to his former ones,—for he felt, he said, “as though he had found a brother in this unknown chieftain.” Those who remarked the effects produced by this letter on its arrival at Sternfels—among whom was Rupert of Stalbach—saw in Erilda only a grateful and happy expression of countenance on hearing her husband’s safety; but could not avoid marvelling at the abrupt start, followed by a long mood of uneasy thought, which betrayed some hidden emotions in Count Eberhard.

And how did Rudolf of the Hartz feel on recovering from his first alarm, and knowing who it was to whom he bore so miraculous a resemblance? Was his breast filled with the same warm and generous impulses that animated Sir Harold’s? No, no! far different emotions agitated him. The shame of having betrayed a superstitious sensitiveness, envy of the bold knight who came to dispute the palm of merit with him in a variety of ways, and still a deeper and almost unfathomable source of hatred, all conspired to goad him on to mental agony. The sentries who paced before his tent declared that he did not rest the whole night, but that he held converse till dawn with his own thoughts, or with some invisible companion. But morning saw him step forth, with a smile as tranquil as though an angel’s hand had smoothed his perturbed brow.

He paid an early visit to Sir Harold, and in the course of a few weeks their intercourse ripened into a close intimacy. With characters like that of the knight of Sternfels it requires

no long period to induce a belief that what should be is ; and that he should become the easy dupe of an artful designer was the natural sequence. His unsuspecting heart opened freely to the cunning designs of the villain who worked on him ; and he felt as though almost repaid for loss of home and friends by this new-made intimacy. It was by no common vows that it was cemented. Sir Harold and Rudolf agreed to become pledged together by the ties of fraternity of arms, a solemn engagement common in those times. This ancient usage was sometimes solemnised by orgies partaking of savage ardour rather than civilised sympathy. But the present votaries did not mix blood with their wine. Religious rites stood in place of that barbarity ; and their "brotherhood" was on one side sanctified by sincerity, while cunning and bad faith degraded it on the other.

It may not be told to what design the duplicity of Rudolf pointed in the first stages of this intimacy. But an accident soon occurred which decided his bias towards an intention of most atrocious stamp. In the frequent encounters of the prolonged campaign the brothers in arms were never separate. The black plume of Sir Harold and Rudolf's white one were the only points of distinction between them. In the hours spared by duty they partook together of the rude joys of the camp ; stretched on the green sward, and singing their light lays by turns, or mutually recounting stories of their past lives—those of one of them being at least veracious.

One day, they were thus lying in Rudolf's tent, when Sir Harold, overcome by fatigue and heat, fell asleep, and his open vest showed his bosom's treasure,—the miniature of Erilda, which he always wore near his heart. Rudolf's eye was attracted to this portrait, which he had never before seen. An instant passion for the beautiful being it represented took possession of his breast. He fixed his enamoured look on the senseless ivory as though it were an object of life on which he gazed. And this single glance awoke a thousand sparklings through the gloomy den of his mind, like the flashes drawn by a single torch from the spar-formed columns and arches of a cavern. But all tended to bring to light one demoniac project. This was to destroy Sir Harold ; to speed straight to Sternfels ; to show his almost identical person to father, wife, and child ; to obtain possession of wealth, influence, title—

and with them that which he now valued, or fancied he valued, higher than all,—the original of the portrait whose beauty had so fascinated him.

From this moment his assiduities to his unsuspecting victim were redoubled. With consummate art he led him on to indulge in the natural garrulity of affection, to talk of those who filled his heart, to relate a thousand little facts that lie loose scattered in the memory, secrets of youthful love, and many minor touches of home description and early recollections, all of which the designing villain treasured deep in his brain.

Twice did Rudolf steal from Sir Harold's breast, while he slept, the portrait of his wife; and with great care and a firm hand, albeit his heart beat high the while, he copied the painting and forged this passport of true love, whose tranquil smile seemed silently to condemn his felony. When the task was over, and some nice and finishing touches added in the security of his own tent, he looked at the work with gloating eyes, and he felt that all preliminary measures were now taken to clear the way for the main act of the design. The destruction of Sir Harold now alone remained to be accomplished. To perform this safely was not a matter as easy as it was desirable. He would not entrust the task to any hand but his own, for he had all the ferocity without the usual recklessness of villany. To assassinate his confiding companion might have been on many occasions easy, but not without exciting suspicion of himself; so he waited, with impatient cunning, till fate might throw some safe opportunity on the path they traced together. This opportunity came at length.

A small division of the imperial army was one day detached to make a false attack on a portion of the main body of the Turkish host, in order to cover some ulterior operations; but particular directions were given to its commander not to risk an engagement which might lead to a general battle. Hurried on, however, by impetuosity, the chieftain went too far, and the consequence was that the few thousand men he commanded fell into an ambuscade, the common tactics of those days, and while he paid with his life the penalty of his rashness, his unfortunate troops were surrounded and left without a single hope of safety. Sir Harold of Sternfels and Rudolf of the Hartz were among those doomed victims.

Prodigies of valour were performed by the furious and desperate Christians. But as mountain streams that shrink in summer between the rugged banks that enclose them, so did the band of heroes, parched and faltering, dwindle away between the closing flanks of the infidels, whose wild yells of triumph told that there was no mercy to be hoped for. The "companions in arms," Sir Harold and Rudolf, both unhorsed and both wounded, stood in the very front of the fight; and wherever an opening could be made in the foe they moved forward side by side, the same in bold and majestic look, their distinguishing plumes flowing behind, like two tall vessels plunging through the sea with streamers floating to the storm. The gallant men of Sternfels followed close on their chieftain, but one by one they dropped down in death, choking the wide chasm of glory's grave.

At length Rudolf sunk to earth, under a powerful stroke; but as the scymitars of the shouting enemy were about to fall on his head and consummate his destruction, Sir Harold threw himself before his body, and for a time kept his numerous assailants at bay. It was in this moment of his companion's generous devotion that Rudolf, driven to the madness of villany, by the dread of his intended victim after all surviving him and his plans, resolved to violate, not only his oaths of brotherhood, but the still more holy ties imposed on him by friendship and gratitude. Rising suddenly up from his recumbent posture, his fierce aspect caused a moment's relaxation in the attacks of Sir Harold's assailants. The newly revived man looked horrible as well as terrible. His blood-drenched plume streamed down upon his deeply stained visage, his eyes shot forth a wild and meteor-like glare through the raven locks that hung disordered around them. He sprang up like a tiger bounding on his prey; but while the dastard foes shrunk back, it was against Sir Harold he sprang. The latter, weak from wounds and exertion, opened his arms to embrace his reviving friend! At the instant Rudolf's rapier pierced his corslet and entered his breast. Sir Harold fell; and then his assassin struck blow after blow, and forgetting self, safety, every thing but the completion of his desperate design—no matter at what cost—he flung his own body on that of the bleeding knight, while the amazed but rejoicing

infidels rushed round the prostrate bodies, and hid the result of the almost incredible scene.

A few stragglers were lucky enough to regain the imperial army. They gave the above-mentioned details of the fatal fight. They could tell no more ; but that as they fled from the elevated grounds which enabled them to see what passed, they heard the clank of chains mingling with dying groans, while at intervals wild shrieks rose up, as if the butchering infidels closed their bloody task at leisure.

END OF VOL. II.

VOLUME THE THIRD.

THE DOUBLE DOUBT.

(CONTINUED.)

CHAPTER III.

As the setting sun softly and gradually retires from earth, gilding it with even its latest ray, so does Hope steal from the breast its glowing beams had enlightened, and leaves for awhile the reflection of its influence behind. And long round Erilda's lone and widowed heart did the spell continue its delusions; and often deceived by Hope's siren voice, she still clung to each new promise, and strove to be again and again betrayed. The fatal tidings of Sir Harold's fall beneath Rudolf's murderous weapon at length reached Sternfels. The anguish of the father may not be told. How then attempt to describe that of the wife?

Six times had the return of spring wakened the torpid flowers, and bade the young year rejoice since the day which had seen Erilda bereft of him who was so dear to her, even in her despair. For her the sad seasons came and went, and seemed at each return to bring her a new load of sorrow. Rumour with its many tongues confused and at length overpowered her. A total vacuity possessed her mind, and sense at length seemed to sleep upon its throne. But even in this state of deadened feeling two excitements held some power over her—her father-in-law's soothing attentions, and her child's innocent endearments. For these she suppressed many a rising sigh and checked many a rushing tear, striving to put on the semblance of a dreary gaiety, by which none, however,

were deceived; and indulging, under favour of night and solitude, in the luxury of silent woe.

Time's untiring chisel continued to trace furrows on Count Eberhard's cheeks, and the tears of parental sorrow found ready channels for their flow. Yet a smile sometimes lightened his grief-worn countenance when he gazed on the fast-springing charms of his granddaughter, who grew more lovely from surrounding woes, like the opening leaves of some sweet plant that seems to spring from nature's griefs as its shoots are refreshed by weeping dews. Freda was indeed the child of sorrow. Cradled in sadness, nursed with sighs, her infancy was an infancy of thought—an early spring on which winter still threw its lingering clouds, to darken the joys of the young year. The melancholy attendance on her mother and her grandsire gave a sadness to her very joys; and while she almost incessantly followed the old man's steps or watched by his couch, Erilda used to steal away from both, to taste, unbroken in upon, the fulness and the bitterness of her own feelings.

Her favourite retreat was a spot on the side of the bank that sloped down to the dell which seems to divide the ruins of the castles. A tender motive of attachment bound her to this spot—it was her mother's burial place. The green raised turf alone marked the lowly grave. No dark cypress, no mournful willow, no beggar stone, nor boastful urn stamped it with Death's proud pagantry. But many a scattered sweet was strown around, in accordance with the wish and the character of the humble mind which chose it for her resting-place, while he who had lived to see her laid in this simple sanctuary was sent, following the forms of pious bigotry, as a banquet for the reptiles of a monument.

Every adornment that could sanctify the place was furnished by Erilda's care. The fragrant lily sent up its sweets through clustering vine branches, to blend with those of the jasmine and woodbine; while roses filling the air with perfume seemed to load the breeze that struggled faintly through the shrubs. The graceful acacia caught the slight influence of the air and shook down its honied blossoms; while the soft showers, that at times fell on the violet beds, were as warm and mild as the tears shed by a mother on the cradle of her sleeping child.

In this hallowed retreat Erilda reigned, sole priestess of its

lonely rites. Here she sought relief from the too noisy condolences of even the sad world of Sternfels. Over this consecrated ground she at times fancied that inspiration was floating; and she loved to believe that the spirit of her whom she could not remember in her mortal form hovered around her. For though memory may not retain one trace of the parent lost in childhood, still the venturous imagination will at times dart upwards to meet the bright form, which it knows but in thought, the angel and the mother joined.

Erilda had few worldly comforters. Rupert of Stalbach, on whom she had long leaned for support in her affliction, he whose blunt kindness was more soothing than the whining sympathy of the world, no longer possessed an influence of which he had become unworthy. His whole conduct was changed, and his real character developed; for until brought to light by circumstances, it was never before evident even to himself. His was one of those unfortunately elastic minds, so pliant as to take whatever form external influences offered to it. Had Rupert never been tempted, he had never fallen; for there was nothing radically vicious in his temperament, nor ought that would have voluntarily sought dishonour. When he first hastened to Sternfels, in the warm glow of parting friendship, he never dreamt of his own interest; and for many successive months he was the solace of those who were left, as he had been the hope of him who was gone.

It was not until the news of Sir Harold's fall had penetrated to his desolate home, that Rupert felt the wild thrill of expectant avarice curdle his blood, and fill his pulse with a monstrous energy. An empoisoned, yet a genial, fluid seemed to run through his whole frame, and to transform him magically into something he had never before been or imagined. A thousand pageants of grandeur floated before him—castles, domains, honours, and hoards of wealth. He recoiled for a moment with an instinctive, but an expiring, throb of right principle; for wherever he turned, in whatever way he sought to dissipate his newly excited feelings, the same visions of greatness sprung up spontaneously in his mind. At length grown familiar with this train of thought, which was encouraged by a host of dissolute companions, he began to be satisfied that it was but right and natural. "Where is the guilt," thought he, "since my cousin Harold

is dead, in hoping for possession of what is legally my own ? And if an old man happens to stand between me and my just inheritance, what sin in wishing him in heaven ?”

But still the aged count lived on, in spite of the impatient calculations of his hungry kinsman. And the latter soon began to run the usual career of expectant heirs, hurried on by all the accessory impulses by which they are assailed and mastered. Leagued with extravagance and vice, he rode the giddy round, and folly toiled to win disgrace, while conscience sternly goading him the while, he was by degrees prepared for any act of villany which would end his overwrought excitement. Erilda, thus abandoned by him who had possessed her whole confidence, mourned the change more for her false kinsman's sake than her own ; while she bent beneath the withering blight which strikes down the heart that was ripening in the mellow warmth of confidence. Yet no reproaches broke from her. She suffered in calm serenity, and seemed like the spirit of happiness, left in mercy to hover over the scenes whence the substance had departed.

The sixth summer since the fatal epoch of Sir Harold's setting out for Hungary had now come round, smiling in the breeze or frowning in storms ; and vegetation's ruddy cheek was beginning to ripen in its beans. Frequent travellers, pilgrims and minstrels, monks and mendicants, presented themselves at the gates of Sternfels, and always found a ready welcome. Though no costly banquets were spread, as of old, for the entertainment of the gay and happy, worldly cares or wearied feet were a sure passport to the hospitality of the castle. Erilda rarely appeared in the hall, unless some grateful visitant expressly asked permission to thank and bless her, or some itinerant son of song implored the honour of chanting an extempore ballad, in honour of those who had sheltered and befriended him.

“ The noon burns fiercely to-day,” said the warder, as a wearied and weather-beaten minstrel entered the porch.

“ Ay, but the frowns of fortune scorch still more fiercely,” replied the wanderer. “ Yet it often happens,” and he smiled as he spoke, “ that the hottest day melts away in showers at evening ! What think you, Master Warder ; will your mistress be inclined to hear a lightsome roundel ? I should like to chase the tears from the eyes of beauty, and make a joyous strain re-

sound in these walls, where they tell me pleasure has not been for a long time a visitant."

"Rest thee, rest thee awhile, good friend. When thou art refreshed thou mayst think of song and lute; there is no melody in a parched throat. But much I doubt me, that even when your harmonies are at their best, my mistress will be disposed to list any notes of merry cadence. She much better likes the sorrowing tone that reminds her of buried joys."

A hurried repast was partaken of by the minstrel, and he had very soon collected round him in the great hall a circle of the well-pleased maidens, who but seldom heard so sprightly a measure as that to which he tuned his lute. Erilda had consented to become also a listener, and she stood pensively, with Freda by her side, so pensively that the minstrel at length begged of her to deign a greater share of attention to his song, "which told of every sweet that could gratify the heart, and strewed flowers on the path of life." The smiling maidens pressed forward to join in the entreaty, and Freda too put up her gentle supplications to her mother. Erilda, however, checked the general flow of affectionate assiduity, and she desired the minstrel to sing no more of images of bliss, "which were but mockery to her, who saw every form of joy but as a phantom that fled while she pursued it."

The minstrel seemed affected by this remonstrance, and tuning his lute to a plaintive air, he sung as follows:—

MINSTREL'S SONG.

I.

"No flowers for me! For here they may not flourish,
This wretched breast their dreary tomb might be;
But nought that warmth would cheer or sunshine nourish,
Can bloom, where all that's bright must perish—
No flowers for me!

II.

"No smiles for me! my anguish never sleepeth,
Hope beams alone on hearts from sorrow free;
O'er the smooth brow his joyous vigil keepeth,
But shuns the heavy lid that weepeth—
No smiles for me!"

While the minstrel sung, Erilda's tears flowed freely. He, seeming to watch every movement of her mind, saw that feeling was touched—apathy aroused. Following up the impression he had made, and as if resolved to awaken, no matter at what cost of suffering, the deepest and most intense of her emotions, he had no sooner finished the last of those stanzas

than he suddenly swept the strings of his instrument in a symphony still more sad. He then sang as follows, in a low and solemn strain of recitative, while his accompaniment was so mournful that woe might have heard it and sighed still deeper than before : —

“ Hark to the groans of the wounded brave,
As they writhe on the chilling earth,
And faintly sigh for their common grave,
Or in fits of anguish wildly rave,
And curse the hour of their birth !

“ Their mouths are parched, and their drooping heads
Hang listless, as they lie,
Pillowed in gore on their earthy beds,
And with fearful wailings cry
For death—but they cannot die !

“ That warrior stretched on the brow of the hill,
Has expiring lain three nights full of pain,
Damp, agonized, and chill—
While the life-blood’s thick and sluggish drain
Weak, drizzling, flows—but the cruel vein
Seems full of vigour still.

“ With faltering tone, he weakly cries,
‘ Now welcome Heaven ! now world farewell ! ’
He sinks, he faints, and his languid eyes
No longer glare on the dismal dell—
But it is not so with him who dies !
The lips unclosed—and the frightful stare
That in death are seen, are wanting there.

“ Slowly he moves—once more reviving ;
He lives ! he lives ! his eye-lids ope !
From transient pangs new hope deriving ——”

A long pause after the utterance of these emphatic words made the listeners, and more particularly Erilda, watch for the concluding line of the stanza with breathless impatience. The minstrel, fixing his looks on her with a still more marked expression of encouragement and cheerfulness, at length sung—

“ Yes, lady ! while there’s life there’s hope ! ”

Agitated and overpowered by the various feelings so strongly excited, Erilda sunk on a seat, and her daughter and attendant damsels strayed round her to offer sundry services. The minstrel, as though he had felt his work completed, retired from the hall. Erilda soon recovered, and as she calmly reflected on what had just passed, she could not resist the ecstatic thought, that the minstrel’s wild song contained some direct allusion to her cause of suffering, nor could she believe that he had but wantonly tortured her. She turned her eyes to seek him, and on finding he was gone she despatched several of her maidens to bring him back. But when they reached the portal,

they learned that the stranger had left the castle, merely saying to the warder, with a significant smile, when the latter invited him to stay till the burning heat was over—"Thou knowest, good friend, the hottest day may melt in mild showers at eve."

When Erilda heard of this answer, it gave fresh strength to her belief of good. In her own despite—for she had long resolved to repress every thing like hope—her spirits seemed rising high beyond their usual depression. Her eyes beamed, her bosom heaved, and her cheeks were flushed, unwonted symptoms with one so long sunk in apathetic insensibility. Hours passed over uncounted. The bell that summoned to the early evening meal was unheeded. Moving with a step so light that she seemed to tread less on earth than air, she hastened to her favourite retreat, unmindful of the threatening aspect of the sky, which foretold a fast-coming storm.

The sun had sunk in fire and tinged the world, as if in anger, with a crimson glow. Storm-pregnant clouds rose in the eastward, and rolled upwards in monstrous and fantastic shapes. Broad flashes spread across the hills in sheets of sickly red; and low thunderings came onwards with every gust that swept the valley. The moon, full and clear, hung high in heaven; her silvery beams mingling with the lightning's flash and the deep blaze of the sun. Erilda saw these symptoms of awful convulsion, but feared them not. Neither did she note the direful assemblage of omens, which in less absorbing moments might have struck her as presages of ill. The bat was skimming the air around her; the owl sat in a bush above; a toad croaked in the sedge below; and a snake was hissing in the grass at her feet!

The rain now came pattering in large drops upon the leaf-roofed canopy of Erilda's bower; and the trees bent and creaked to the gloomy wind. Magic could not combine more portentous solemnities; nor guilt find more fitting accompaniments for its dark doings. Still Erilda gazed fearlessly on the scowling sky, rapt in a reverie of long-forgotten hope, when suddenly a voice rose from the shrubbery just below her, in tones so sweet that they might have almost hushed the deep and dismal sounds with which they mixed. Erilda started into a throb of newly-awakened amaze. "Is it," exclaimed she, "the stranger minstrel that mingles his mysterious strains with

the sounds of the storm?—No, no! there never lived on earth but one mortal voice that could breathe such tones as those had!"

Another thunder-burst gone by, the warbled music came again; and as the singer had approached nearer and nearer, the air and words both fell distinctly upon the spell-bound listener's ear:—

"When friendship's honest vows we breathe
They need not flow from gilded bowers;
And if affection twine the wreath
No matter where she culls the flowers!"

"Shield and protect me, saints of heaven! Holy shade of her whose grave I clasp, watch over me—save thy daughter!" exclaimed Erilda, sinking on the mound, breathless and distracted. In a moment more the rustling of the foliage told her that some one burst through it. A man had indeed violated the sanctuary; and throwing himself on one knee beside her, he caught her in his arms—her form clinging instinctively to his pressure, and a not-to-be-mistaken voice murmured these delightful words:—"Rise, rise my Erilda—my wife—to new-found joy, to the embrace of thy long-lost husband!" And obeying the summons which echoed the laws of nature and love, she arose and threw herself transported into his enfolding arms.

At this instant a fierce and sulphuric flash enveloped both; a simultaneous crash, as though a rock of brass was shattered by the rattling peal was heard; an old oak close beside blazed up as the bolt struck its stem; yet heedless of the shock, he softly murmured, "Shrink not, my bride, but lead me to happiness! Oh, shudder not, Erilda! See, the very heavens hold jubilee in honour of our second nuptials!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE fury of the tempest passed by. The last echo of the thunder murmured among the distant hills. One breeze swept dying along the waters of the Rhine, as if the storm-fiend had breathed his last. Reviving nature rose up in new vigour and spread a greener garment over the plains. The grass sprang

freshly to meet the elastic foot of the hare and coney. The moist grapes shone clustering on the vines. The wild flowers sent out new odours ; while the riotous songsters of bush and brake shook off the glittering dew-drops, and myriads of insects were seen sporting over the blossomed herbage, in the mild exhalations which all earth sent up like incense offered to heaven.

And if meaner nature thus paid its tribute of praise, how did she, the happiest of Earth's daughters, pour out her grateful thanks? With what rapture did she hail the light that broke on her bosom's gloom, as suddenly as the spring bursts forth after the dreary night of a northern winter? With a heart full of holy ardour, Erilda stole from the couch where her husband lay in slight slumber, sleep having at length untied the fond embrace of love. She knelt at the casement, tears of happiness stealing down her cheeks, like the sweet dew that flows at dawn from the flower-topped tree of Canada. Her oraisons finished, she turned to gaze again on him who, next to heaven, was worthy of her idolatry. The whirl of joy of the preceding night had not left her power or thought to scan each varying shade in his loved form. She only knew that he was there. Changed no doubt, in feature much, the natural effects of time and suffering ; but his feelings of affection all right—she heeded not the rest ! But hanging over him as he now slept in the morning ray, she could not resist a wandering, an uneasy sensation. It was not that she marvelled to see his brow marked with the blighting touch of care ; but that he, restored to joy and peace, should now groan and start at times in perturbed motion, tossing wide his arms as though anxious to rush upon some noxious thing, and then struggling as if a phantom's weight oppressed him. Erilda, pained at his disquiet, even though she felt it to be unreal, was on the point of awakening him to the truth of blissful fact, when suddenly he exclaimed, in fierce accents, "Die, hateful wretch!" and with clenched fist, close-knit frown, and widely opening eyes, he sprang from the couch, a fancied falchion in his hand, and big drops standing on his brow.

Erilda had scarcely shrunk from the thunderbolt at whose fall nature itself seemed to shudder—but that look of terror seemed to carry death to her heart's happiness. The agitated dreamer, however, soon recovered from his imagined pangs, be

they of what nature they might, and drawing her towards him, with a tender look, he said, "Oh, Erilda! come and breathe the balm to my tortured bosom—fly not that once treasured home, though memory breaks its rest, as the winds stir the sea's surface into unquiet waves."

Reassured by his soothing tone—oh, how easy is it to hush the fears and doubts of true affection!—her heart beat calmly once more, and she pressed him to reveal the cause of his emotion.

"Ask not, sweet love," said he in a cheerful tone, "'tis past and gone—'tis nothing! a mere thought—a shadow of dark hours gone by—which like yesternight's storm, only serves to purify our heaven of delight. But hark! I hear the sound of the assembling vassals. Ah, how much more sweetly will their rude greetings fall on my ear than the forced acclamations of worldly crowds! We must, love, descend and meet my father—see, he stands already at the gate. And now, my own Erilda, on this happy occasion thou must be my prompter, for in truth I need one. Many of the faces, well known in early youth, have faded from my mind. Look at this wound, one of war's prodigal gifts—the stroke fell close on my brain,—and I doubt me it broke some of the threads in memory's web. I often vainly strive to retrace in my mind the features of individuals, or the minute details of facts; but some blest cares, some loved faces, lie so deeply graven, they defy corroding time or effacing accident! Thus, my best life! each of thy dear traits, every shifting shade of thy expressive countenance, has ever been as freshly before me, as in the days of our early love, when the skilful limner traced them here."

With these words, and a look of tenderness, he drew from his breast the well-known portrait, which Erilda little thought had escaped the perils of his manifold adventures since they parted. This proof of his constant affection brought tears of delighted consciousness to her eyes. "See, beloved one," said he; "here was the amulet that kept my heart safe from a thought unworthy of love or of thee!"

She looked doubtfully through a mist of tears. Then turned aside her head, smiling pensively, and exclaiming, "Alas! 'tis true this once was me—but it is me no more. I cannot believe the whispers of vanity that would tell me I resemble now what I was then, in blushing hope, a promised bride,

catching from thee the smile that played on thy features, and which the flattering artist made for thee while my own. Alas ! I am indeed changed since then. And canst thou, Harold, fix thy fond looks still upon a blighted flower ?”

“Lovely, ever-blooming Erilda ! let no words like these escape thy lips. Like the bee who abandons the swarm to taste the full-blown rose, whose young buds had before pleased him, so have I left the world’s crowds for the meridian charms of her whose youthful beauty had fascinated me.”

It was in converse like this, suited to young lovers rather than old married folk, that the unmarked minutes were flying till Freda came to summon them. She sportively chided her mother’s delay ; but silently hid her blushing face against her stranger sire’s bosom, as he tenderly folded her in his arms.

Never did a day of rejoicing break more blithely than that on which the united vassals of Sternfels and Liebenstein woke the echoes of wood and hill with their loud shouts. Tumult and faction may swell the venal crowds of cities ; trumpets and timbrils flourish in the triumphal march of kings ; flattery strain its throat in efforts to outvoice the tones of selfishness—all is a dead-weight on the heart—all is discord to the ear. But when true feeling bursts from honest sincerity, the modest sounds are more grateful than the most studied melodies of false praise. The old towers of the twin castles now sent back the echoes of such cheering tones. The festive throng clamoured its rejoicings, without any mercy to the sensitive ears of refinement. Echo started to hear such sounds, where grief had so long stood sentinel. The wondrous news of Sir Harold’s safe return was soon conveyed from hamlet to hamlet, and the little world of the district poured forth its population, to hail the event and pay the heart’s homage to their new found lord.

And he now stands in the midst of the throng, Count Eberhard resting on his arm ; the one like the shaft of some proud column which has braved the assaults of wind and time, the other like a splendid fragment of the wall which leans against the pillar for support. And Erilda ! and Freda ! Never could the pencil sketch a lovelier group, though taste and talent had exhausted their sweetest imaginings.

The feeble pen cannot paint the joys of such a day as this. It may be imagined only by the pleasure-loving heart that

lightly beats to sounds and sights of innocent mirth. Such may picture the crowd gamboling on the green, decked in all the gaudy display of the rustic wardrobe and the glories of the rifled gardens; the gay flags and banners; the dance, the music, the song, the shouts; the indescribable grace of an assemblage of objects, incongruous to each other, when the rude children of nature let their hearts run riot. Next came the feasting, furnished by Count Eberhard's hospitality to all comers; when cellar and larder poured out their deepest stores to those in whom appetite kept ample pace with joy.

The banquet finished, and many a flask of purest Rhine wine emptied in honour of the day, every eye seemed to fix on Sir Harold for the promised explanation of the causes of his long absence and miraculous return. Count Eberhard sat at the head of the board, his son placed at one side, and at the other the strange minstrel, the companion of his homeward journey, whose mysterious but significative songs had awakened Erilda's feelings so keenly, and prepared her for the coming of her long-lost lord. The old count rose at length, and turning towards Sir Harold, he said, while every other voice was instantly hushed, "Prop of my house! Harold, my beloved and valiant son! now tell thy marvellous tale, which so many expectant ears are waiting for. Tell us all what miracle has given thee back to us, to be once more the soul of general hope, and the source of new life to me!"

"My honoured sire! my wife, my child—my friends!" said he thus appealed to, in a firm and affectionate tone, "endearing names! Associate links in the chain which binds me to these loved scenes of youth and happiness! To all present, whose hopes and wishes blend their magic tracery through my own, I hasten to reveal the main incidents of six years' endurance of ills, that would have bowed down any mind not upheld by the excitement of this oft hoped-for scene. It were needless now to relate the events of the bloody fight that was supposed to have numbered me with the dead, or the preceding events, which, I learn from my wife and father, were all duly, and with but slight variation from truth, conveyed to astonished Germany. Neither need I now dwell on the suffering I endured when suspended life returned to me again in agony still greater than accompanied its apparent loss. But my astonishment on reopening my heavy lids

may be worth relating—it may amuse and cannot give you pain.

“When I fell on the field of death—of death in all its most hideous forms—my eyes seemed to close on a scene of hell. Bodies lay around me almost putrid in the fiery and fetid air. Sounds were whizzing in my ear, in all the fierce confusion of those which the damned might send forth. Vultures were hovering above, and wolves were prowling around, ardent and anxious for their ready prey. In such a scene I sunk into an oblivion which, as I felt it coming, I believed and hoped was death. When I revived from my trance of pain, every scattered thought seemed to bring conviction that the soul had burst its earthly prison and lived in brighter realms. All round me a scene of wonder was visible. No living form intruded. Not a sound ruffled the still but fragrant air. I lay on a flower-spread couch. A star-enamelled canopy hung above me, beaming with the dazzling lustre reflecting from the soft light of a single lamp. Icicles hung pendent from the arch, shining in diamond splendour. A gushing fountain soothed me, with its quiet fall and the gentle rippings of its waters, as they were lost in the shade beyond. Trees, shrubs, and flowers, of every varying colour, seemed to stand self-planted in magical groups. No fluttering zephyr broke the brilliant cheater, or shook from the banches of this breezeless grove the crystallized embroidery with which it was spangled.

“Wildered by this burst of soft magnificence, I believed myself in heaven. But a purely mortal rapture took possession of my breast on finding there thy portrait, my Erilda, safely reposing. Oh ! how I blest the unknown deliverer, who so well knew the mysteries of that true science of healing which cures the body through the mind, and who had placed within my ready reach the object that could best assure my wakening thought that there was still a paradise on earth !

“The cooling air had assuaged the anguish of my wounds, which were covered with healing salves, and bound with neat fillets. And soon I saw revealed to me the form of him who had done these deeds of Christian charity. Approaching me, in cautious watchfulness, an old man appeared. He was in that pride of years when manliness dissolves in age, and snowy tresses give token of wisdom. He was a reverend anchorite,

one of those abounding blessings of humanity with which the countries of the East are rife. His words seemed the living breath of sanctity—his looks were like light from beyond the grave! Such was the saint-like man, the genius of the place who had snatched my still breathing body from heaps of slain and through seas of gore, as soon as night gave facilities to his task. Saved thus by him—let me now picture him dying by me. Nay, start not, my friends—I must hurry through this sad episode of my adventures. The infidel blood-hounds knew my deliverer well—they knew that he was most likely to brave the conditions on which they tolerated his existence, and seek to save one victim from the general slaughter. They came to search his spar-formed grotto—they found me with him—they slew him! With a deadlier hate, they dragged me to the more ignoble doom of slavery. The very memory of that fact leaves a blot on a freeman's purity! A slave! chained to the earth which was watered by the sweat of toil—reproach my wages—stripes my reward—for five dreary years I dragged on the load of life. Despair more than once raised my hand—but the loud command of Heaven seemed to stay the self-destroying stroke, and a voice seemed at the worst of my sufferings to whisper words of hope and comfort!

“Still might my body rot in chains, or sweltering droop in the land of the infidel, had not one gallant friend been near—a fellow prisoner—to give me life in the liberty he procured me. It boots not to tell the many perils through which his cautious valour had to work to obtain our freedom. He succeeded. I was the partner of his flight. From country to country we have worked our weary pilgrimage together; till yesternorn preceding me here, his wild harmony prepared thee, my Erilda, for my coming, even while his gentle heart was bleeding at the pain he gave, like a surgeon who shrinks while he probes his patient's wound. Watching thee to thy sacred bower, he sought me in my anxious shelter close by; when I, heedless of the tempest, sent forth those blessed sounds of other, but not happier, days, as most likely to assuage thy fears and harmonize with thy hopes. Here sits my friend, and while my home exists, and you, all my friends, cherish the memory of this day, he shall ever find it his refuge from worldly care or mortal wrong.”

Sir Harold ceased, and scarcely had his last words died away, when loud bursts of gratulation rung around the hall. The assemblage soon after broke up, and all wended their homeward way, overflowing with the joyous sympathies of vassal fidelity. But this was not unlike all other cases, in which one or more exceptions are found. And now, as withered branches may disfigure the green symmetry of some shadowing tree, there were found a few among the faithful serfs of Sternfels who gave no response to the clamorous acclamations of the rest, but looked gloom and disappointment in the midst of the general joy. These were the creatures of Rupert of Stalbach, the engines that worked out his ends of extravagance, the purveyors of his spendthrift cravings, whose supplies were acknowledged by anticipated grants and mortgages of large portions of the fair lands of Sternfels. These men, who every day looked out for the death of Count Eberhard, and the accomplishment of Rupert's promises, contingent on his succeeding to his heritage, were now overwhelmed with grief and rage, at seeing their air-built hopes scattered to the winds. Resolved at least to make Rupert taste the whole bitterness of the draught which they were themselves forced to swallow, they hastened to one of his not distant haunts with malicious speed, and they found him in the midst of his wonted revelry and recklessness. Like the hot Arab, who sucks in the breeze that wafts him pestilence and death, Rupert rushed with open arms to meet the messengers of ill.

"Ah, my good friends," cried he, "I see the good news in your eyes—I read it in your flushed cheeks. He is dead! The old man is gone at length! In another day all will be our own! Our broad hands will grasp it *all*! But now, my friends, you have brought supplies? How much? For much will be wanted to meet immediate calls. Welcome, welcome good friends! Ho, there! wine, for these worthy men! And now, my masters, let us pledge a full cup to the peace of cousin Eberhard's soul!"

This rhapsody was received in silence. No smile of assent gave back the eagerly watched-for answer. On the contrary, Rupert saw on the countenances of his tormentors an expression of cold and cruel irony mixed with bitter disappointment. He could not bear this suspense. He pressed furiously for a

reply and an explanation. It came. Not in relenting condolence for their common misfortune, but with reproach and taunt, and threat that added to the pangs of the plain-spoken truth. Rupert stood for awhile transfixed and speechless. Despair seemed to have paralysed both mind and body. But still his busy thoughts were at work ; and whether from conviction or artifice, he quickly announced the conclusions at which he stated them to have arrived. Self-interest quickened his intellect, and either solved a mystery or suggested the best means of turning it to his own account. His silence was at length broken by a loud laugh : not a laugh of maniac despair, but one that might fitly have expressed the glee of some demon over a ripe plan of mischief.

“ What then ! ” cried he, frowning on his companions in the announced ill fortune, “ must I bear these insulting menaces, the ignoble scorn of such things as ye ? Paltry miscreants, who come to din me with your credulous selfishness ? Ye whose murky intellects make ye mentally blind ? Sir Harold living ? Away, ye pitiful wretches, if ye want proofs of his death, and root them from the rotten graves of Bulgaria. He alive ! What bold impostor has come to assume his place and frighten ye from the truth ? Ha ! ye smile at the suggestion. Ye are pleased with this plain solving of the cheat, that lays this transfigured ghost, and clears your base minds from their unworthy fears ? Ye remember then the story of my kinsman’s death ? Your palsied memories recover the shock, and recall the facts of the case, — how the beholders marked Harold and his murderer stalking together through the battle field, so like that the shuddering Turks who gazed on them shrunk back, believing them spectres raised by magic ? And who, think ye, has now invaded my rights, and, trusting to the changes of six years and the frail memories of credulous fools like you, usurps dead Harold’s place in Sternfels, — who but this Rudolf of the Hartz, come from afar to rob me and ruin you ? I have no doubts — not one. My arm shall quick follow the impulse of my mind. I shall soon crush this reprobate ; but I shall need your aid, to follow up the justice of my cause, whether by law or force. So now unstring your common purse ! Out with the supplies ! What ! ye hesitate ? Hear me, then : by Hell’s worst pangs I swear to ye, that should your griping avarice refuse this call for our common interests, I will in-

stantly fly to Sternfels, acknowledge the usurper, throw myself on his sense of what is wisest for his own security, obtain an ample compromise, and abandon all my claims. What! does this make ye tremblingly generous, for your own sakes? It seems so." And, as the group of usurers poured out the contents of their purses, and promised further supplies for the morrow, Rupert added, with a sneer of the deepest scorn, "What, all emptied? Now, then, base minions, avaunt!" and suiting the action to the word, he drove them with fresh insults from his presence.

A month had passed fleetly over the mild enjoyments of Sternfels. All was recovered happiness and cheerful quiet, far different from the woful tranquillity which had for years reigned over the place. Within the castle, as without, every thing breathed the settled calm of security, when one morning, as the little circle were placidly indulging their domestic mood, a murmured din arose from the court-yard, and soon increased to loud uproarious shouts, while thick-clattering feet were accompanied on the stairs and in the passages by threats and imprecations. Count Eberhard, Erilda, and Freda, alarmed at the rude sounds, turned shrinking for protection towards him, in whom the noisy crash seemed to rouse up every stirring feeling of the soul. Seizing his ponderous rapier, which hung close by, he placed himself before the three objects of his care; threw one arm around them, held the other ready for fight, his well-proved brand high poised above him — his brow gathered, and his look fixed for battle.

At this moment the door of the chamber was flung violently open, and one of the castle retainers entered abruptly, breathless and bleeding. — "My noble masters," cried he, "a ferocious band force the entrances too feebly guarded." The man fell to the earth as he uttered the words; and at the instant, Rupert of Stalbach rushed in, followed by several of his stalwart associates. His looks spoke desperate purposes, and with voice in accordance with his menacing air, he exclaimed — "Yield, impostor!" — but ere he could proceed in his sentence his eye caught the fixed and piercing look of mixed contempt and scrutiny sent forth from this majestic-looking being whom he so ventured to confront. Rupert turned askance, unable to bear this look, beaming from a countenance which seemed to shine in the dignity of conscious right.

"This is the work of magic," cried Rupert, turning to his

associates. "He is impostor and wizard both. That light once beamed in Harold's eyes, and this sorcerer has caught it for his own! Living look casts no such expression as that!"—and with these words, but without venturing again to brave the glance he shrunk from, he stole shuddering away; while all his blustering band quickly followed him—dispersed and scattered by a frown! They fled so fast, and the aspect of the whole scene was so suddenly changed to precisely what it was before their irruption, that it seemed scarcely the work of fact, but rather the agency of some illusion, dissipated ere it was rightly observed. The old count looked his amaze, Erilda was silent, her eyes fondly fixed upon her lord, while resentment of Rupert's daring slander flushed her cheeks. At length Count Eberhard spoke:—"What meant the ruffian aspersion?" said he, "does then abandoned Rupert, the disgraced one of his name and race, hope to cover his own infamy by flinging an attain on thy honour?"

No answer met these questions. Nothing was to be seen in the countenance of the questioned but an expression of high disdain, as if he scorned even to remove the slur cast upon his dignity. He stalked the room in haughty silence, when Erilda, as if awoke to some point in a new train of thought, suddenly addressed him:—"But say, my Harold, —and it is the audacious blasphemy which mixed the vile word impostor with thy name that prompts my question,—say why I have never yet heard thy lips pronounce that marvellous, that mysterious name, so linked with thy former fate, and which, in spite of my shuddering repugnance, comes still irresistibly blended with every thought of thee—Rudolph of the Hartz?"

Her look asked for reply, but it sunk back within herself as it met the furious glance that darted from his. His cheek glowed deeply, and his very forehead was flushed—with anger it seemed to her—at the mention of this name. But like the excitement produced by his dream, this passed quickly over. In a subdued tone, which marked a struggle to preserve his calmness unruffled, he replied:—"Oh, wonder not, my Erilda, if at the collision caused by my memory with that abhorred name, I feel the lightning of thought flashing and searing my mind. Even in my dreaming hours the phrensied

fit comes o'er me, which haunts me at times awake. Wonder not then, my loved one, if even your angel lips cannot sanctify the odious sound of this one word — this solitary name, which must ever stand accursed in my feelings."

"Forgive me, Harold, for an unintended mischief. Oh, too well I know thy bosom's movements now — too well doth mine respond to the agony of that which broods over outraged friendship. And if I feel this strongly, how must thou suffer when thy memory is roused to a thought of that fell traitor! Oh, pardon this first, this last pang by me inflicted!"

Thus spoke the wife's affection — solaced and reassured by one word and look of kindness. But the Count Eberhard sighed deeply, and mused still more so, as if his breast contained some secret cause of agitation connected with the words just spoken. Meanwhile Rupert and his recreant gang had disappeared, contenting their valour with a loud utterance of threats at the walls of the castle from which they had so speedily retreated. While the leader, to cheer the drooping spirits of his comrades, checked his own doubts and fears to bring quiet to theirs; and swore that if human laws had power to justify right and punish wrong, the wizard whose unearthly glance had so overwhelmed him should soon be sent back to his liege lord, the devil!

A yell of loud applause hailed this denunciation, and closed the display of courageous boasting, which waged war against witchcraft and wielded no weapons but words.

CHAPTER V.

ANOTHER year was gone by, a year of strife, contest, and disputation. For Rupert of Stalbach, supported and supplied by his baffled and bewildered crew, urged every means that could agitate the question of his rights before the tardy tribunals, and with the ill-arranged forms which then distorted law and made justice a mere mockery. The proofs which Rupert offered in support of his charge of imposture and magic resolved themselves into "the admitted battle, where Sir Harold

was seen to fall under the stroke of his twin-like assassin ; the ominous and evil-boding night on which the stranger appeared at Sternfels, to assume the place of the murdered man ; his forgetfulness of several among the vassals and serfs who thronged to welcome his arrival ; the deep fits of abstraction, such evidence of probable guilt ; unlike the former well-remembered cheerfulness of Sir Harold. The wonderful resemblance of form and feature to the latter was not a totally unusual circumstance between brothers ; but what could produce it in those unlinked by ties of blood, except the deadly arts of glamour, that change forms and feelings, while a philter, no doubt, cunningly administered to Erilda, had in all likelihood warped her mind to believe the reality of what every one else must plainly see to be false ? ”

Many slighter links bound this chain of evidence together. The accused heard all with calm contempt. When interrogatories thronged on him in all the subtlety of law, he merely gave his negative or assent, without the least remark. There were some who did not fail to observe that this looked more like cautious cunning than indignant truth. Numerous witnesses vouched for the identity of the present “ young lord ” of Sternfels, with him who had been born and brought up there : others it is true, who passed for keen observers, traced what appeared some discrepancies in manner, and pointed out some points of difference in looks which led them to a contrary conclusion. But these were all silenced and put down by the perfect confidence with which Count Eberhard and so many others confirmed Sir Harold’s actual presence, and scouted the notion of imposture or magic. After duly weighing the case, and as Rupert and his friends did not fail to suggest, being much, if not unduly influenced by the interest of Count Eberhard, the judges pronounced their sentence of acquittal. It was founded on the opinion that “ villany could not in any case so give the lie to probable truth. That mortal memory could not treasure up, even though industrious deceit might have collected so many, the little trivial incidents of youth as were constantly touched upon in the most natural manner by the accused knight. That it was above all impossible that the former secrets of man and wife could be known but to one or the other : and that however common persons might be deceived by a striking resemblance,

at least the partner of a man's bed and bosom could not be so." As to the charge of magic, it was scouted altogether, resting on no proof whatever, and the only guilt seen by the judges was in the conspiracy formed by the ravenous heir of Sternfels and his supporters, to crush an innocent man and obtain his rights.

When the judgment which absolved him from this disgraceful accusation was conveyed to the acquitted knight, no frown of anger could be traced on his brow—no smile of triumph on his lip—no vaunt broke from him over his foiled accusers. If any emotion appeared, it was one of pity for their disgrace.

And how felt Evilda, during the heavy period between the early accusation and the final acquittal? Did she, while proofs were raked together and doubts accumulated, vacillate or tremble for his fate? No, firm and confident, she repelled every surmise of uncertainty; and when it was sought to shake her faith by insinuation, assertion, or threat, she only smiled and turned to him she loved and trusted. This, this is true love, fast clinging through danger and ignominy; and breaking through the tangled web of suspicion, as the breath of morning scatters the gossamer which hangs in frail festoons from branch to branch.

Rupert of Stalbach, goaded almost to madness by the result of his efforts, stepped on from every gradation between hatred and vengeance, till he was ripe and ready for any desperate act. In spite of the decision pronounced by the judges, and approved by the world at large, he maintained his accusation, and laboured incessantly for new proofs in its support. The associates in his efforts, urged by the common ruin which threatened to engulf them all, did not fail him in each emergency. But it was not for love of truth that they sifted evidence and sought discovery. The light of truth carries blindness to their like, and gain is the divinity at whose shrine they offer homage while working in their own sordid cause. The fame of the disputed title was bruited far and wide, and the lovers of the marvellous did not want excitement, nor fail to follow it up by exaggeration.

Still the seasons rolled on, indifferent to the agitations of mankind; and Time flapped his steady wings alike over guilt and innocence, though the one might fancy them to lag slowly,

and the other to fly with redoubled speed. The summer gradually expired, sinking imperceptibly into more temperate months; and ere autumn was observed to have run its career, winter was far advanced. A mild season in a moderate climate brought none of those sudden changes which shake more northern latitudes. Spring had again returned, and the pregnant plains teemed once more with life. And while in the new-leaved groves and woods of Sternfels the young nestlings chirped their early songs, a sound of blither joyance broke within the halls. For Erilda, to crown the height of her own and her husband's happiness, had given birth to a fine boy. The joy attendant on such an event, which gave a lineal heir to the title and estates, and placed both beyond dispute, might well demand some more than passing record; but the forms of guilt flit across the tenor of the story, and gathering groans seem to stifle each sound of revelry and rejoicing.

While pleasure filled the halls and bowers, and every heart beat high with sympathetic pride, Count Eberhard formed the sole exception to the common feeling. He was evidently fast drooping to the grave. The lambent flame of life flickered and threatened to subside. His spirit, fluttering, as it were, on the world's confines, longed to sigh itself calmly away. The softened lustre of his eyes would at times fix complacently on the dear-loved group that watched his couch, yet at times the lids would close as if to shut out some painful forms of fancy, while low sighs spoke a hidden sorrow, and a hectic tinge seemed to tell that it was coupled with some thought of shame. Lured by the summer warmth, he often left the castle, accompanied by his old confessor or by Freda, to wander in the copses or glades close at hand; but oftener he sought the silent woods alone, no witness on his wanderings but the eye of Heaven, while he sent up his prayers to the God of nature, in the fitting temple formed by the verdant sod below, and the outstretched branches above.

The second anniversary of the day on which the strange minstrel appeared at the castle of Sternfels, followed by him who now reigned paramount there, was now about to be kept, with the usual festivities and rejoicings. On the evening preceding this now established festival, Count Eberhard showed more than usual emotion. A select party of friends

were assembled at the castle, and they, with his own family, were more than commonly assiduous towards the old man. When the hour for retiring came, he took from Erida her infant son, and pressing him fervently to his breast, he kissed him, and prayed with all the grace of natural religion, that years of health and happiness might be granted the boy. The pious invocation finished, his mind seemed once more overcast; and after a pause, he said, with an effort at composure,—“Now, my friends, night woos me to retire. My full heart bids ye all farewell; yet with its fulness, which ought to be of unmixed joy, one bitter drop of early error mingles and turns it to gall. The memory of this taint is always struggling for utterance. Pride has long kept it concealed. But duty to my beloved son here breaks down every restraint. His detracted purity requires the confession of my sin. When abandoned Rupert urged his accusation, and mixed the charge of magic with his wild assertion, I had nearly broken my silence, with an avowal that would easily have solved the miracle, and melted down the wonder, of my son Harold's likeness to that dark wretch, whose name thrills me with horror. I am now exhausted; but at to-morrow's noon, when we all with the numerous guests of our festival are assembled, I will publicly make my confession, moving a load of remorse off my conscience, and establishing beyond any further cavil the perfect purity of my son.”

After these words the old count withdrew, and whispered conjectures immediately arose as to the promised revelation. But he the most concerned of all uttered no sound nor hazarded any opinion. Buried in a deep reverie, he neither spoke, nor sighed, nor moved. But his expressive countenance told that thought was busy. What feelings might be at work to move his lip and light his eyes none might divine. Emotion for his slandered fame, wounded pride, astonishment, alarm, the fear of danger, projects of ill,—any of these might produce such symptoms. And each or all were evident, as passion or prejudice coloured the minds of the several observers. Thus Erida saw nothing but natural surprise and the frown of recollected anger for past injuries. One witness was there, however, whose suspicions took a different turn. He was one of those minions of Rupert of Stalbach, who, feigning friendship for the circle of Sternfels, frequented the castle

only for the purpose of watching the proceedings of its inmates, and reporting them to his employer, one of that degraded class held in scorn by the veriest dregs of guilt, a spy!—short, but eloquent word that speaks all that language can tell of infamy. This wretch saw conscious crime in the hectic flush which to Erilda displayed only reflected indignation, and he flew quickly to inform Rupert of the scene, and impress him with the truth of his own commentary on it.

The other persons present at the scene passed an anxious interval between the words of Eberhard and his appointed hour for the promise and wished-for confession. Erilda rose early on the morrow; but her lord entreated that until noon, “the hour when,” as he said, “his heart’s forebodings of a detested consanguinity were to be confirmed or dispelled,” he might be left alone, nor intruded on by any of the anxious or curious visitors. She promised strict obedience, and he was left, as he desired, to his own thoughts.

The morning waned, and Count Eberhard was seen taking his slow and solitary way into the intricate paths of the wood, as was his wont, to prepare himself, as all observers concluded, for the approaching hour of noon. The expanse of heaven was cloudless. Its deep intensity of blue was so clear and so exquisitely bright, that it seemed as though the arduous vision might have pierced its unfathomed depths, no breeze stirred the grass, nor moved the light shadows of tree or herb. The thin-curling smoke rose up in a straight column to the sky. The swallows glided past on languid wings. The fig’s broad leaves hung flaccid. The gasping throats of the singing birds gave out a faint and trembling tone. Heat ruled the hours. It was now burning noon; the old count was nowhere to be seen; and the gathering vassals, together with the members of the family and the household, press in anxious throngs towards the path which he had been observed to take. Alarm began to fly among the crowd. They broke away in straggling groups, and their loud halloo’s were soon heard breaking from all quarters of the wood.

Freda chose her path alone, in the direction of a shaded grotto, which she knew to be a favourite retreat of her grand-sire. Scarcely had she entered the deep glen in which this solitary spot stood, when a shriek broke through the woods from her well-distinguished voice, of a tone so piercing that it

silenced the shouting groups and filled all with the horrid conviction of some dire calamity. The terror-stricken hearers rushed from every direction towards that of the sound, whose meaning they panted yet trembled to discover. Bursting through the brush-wood which obstructed the way, the first comers had just reached the grotto's mouth, when they saw Freda stretched senseless on the earth, and, prostrate within the grot, the body of Count Eberhard bathed in blood. Death, but not natural death, was stamped on his pale face and convulsed features; and closer examination discovered three wounds close to his heart. It was evidently a practised arm that wrought the death-blows on that vital spot. But the trained murderer had met a stubborn resistance from the brave old man. A furious struggle had marked the ground. His garments were torn as though he had fought away his life. One hand was deeply gashed from a probable effort to wrench the blade from his assassin's hand. The other held fast clenched a lock of black hair, snatched convulsively from his head. Such was the picture that met the view.

Horror seemed to have congealed the observers, and for awhile no hand ventured to touch the dead body, or lift up Freda to recovered sense. At length, however, they raised her from the earth, while a few, with nerves more firmly strung than the rest, bore out the corpse, and they moved along towards the castle in sad procession, blood-stains marking their route. Reports of the dreadful discovery soon reached the castle. The shocked household poured forth in breathless haste; but outstripping all comers, were two, who rushed on in that desperate speed which urges the hope-bereft sufferer to what he knows for inevitable ruin. It was thus that Erilda and her husband came on. She flung a volume-speaking glance of agony upon the bleeding corpse — then sprang forward and clasped the still insensible Freda in her arms. Pressed to the natural home of her mother's bosom, the girl awoke. Her first wandering gaze seemed to fix on no particular object. The first that caught it was her father, leaning over her with a woe-struck expression in his looks. Instantly the repetition of the horrid scream, before so shocking to the hearers, but now more faint, as if it were but the echo of the former which had lain until then in her bosom's depths, broke from her, and at the same moment she exclaimed, "Oh!

murderer!—father!” and then closed her eyes and turned aside as though his presence were intolerable.

“Great heavens!” cried her sire, raising his hands towards heaven; “she raves in phrensy—she knows not what she says, nor whom she sees! Oh, God! who hast snatched my father in thine anger, in mercy spare my child!”

Her eyes again reopened—again fixed on him—again shot forth rays of frantic brilliancy—while “murderer, and father!” were still her anguished exclamations. The startled concourse, recovering from their first affrighted amazement, no longer searched for evidence in the gaping wounds of the dead count. A burst of light seemed at once to break on them. The scene of the preceding evening—the promised revelation, which might perhaps have involved truths of some damning import to him most affected in its bearing—the morning’s privacy self-sought by him on whom all eyes were now fixed, against whom all hands were ready to be raised,—all was seen with one glance of reverting conviction, and each is satisfied that son, impostor, parricide, were identified together in the person of Rudolf of the Hartz!

From the stupefaction which first overwhelmed them, the crowd now sprang to furious agitation. Fiercely vehement to gather the truth, they questioned Freda, and hearkened with impatient fury to the short sad tale sobbed forth by the child in the unhesitating candour of youth. “As I approached the grotto I saw my grandsire’s bleeding body stretched on the earth—my father, muffled in his cloak, stood beside it—he said nothing, but looked pale, and frowned—he held a red-bladed dagger in his hand—I thought he laughed horribly as he saw me sinking down—I know nothing farther.”

“Enough! enough! too much for human nature. Oh, monstrous! horrible!” and such like expressions burst spontaneously from the throng, who rushed round the unresisting culprit; and while some clamoured for instant justice and strove to immolate him on the spot, the less inflamed majority succeeded in preserving him for the vengeance of the offended laws. He was soon bound firmly, dragged away to the neighbouring town, and plunged, as a loathed criminal, into its deepest prison cell.

For three days and nights he lay in the living burial of his solitude, while proofs and preparations for trial and execution

were making. Left to brood on his coming fate, no sound fell on his ear to tell the tread of time. So deep did his dungeon lie in earth, that the ponderous bell of his prison, which flung its mighty tone for leagues over the surrounding country, failed to reach him. His aching eyes vainly strove to catch a glimpse of light when the thick door opened to admit his food—for though the broad radiance pains the vision, as when the lazy sunbeams crawl on some less hideous cell, still the blessed smile of day gilds even the links of slavery's chain. But the splendid mockery came not on him!

And turning our contemplation for awhile from the captive, let us fix on her who walks abroad in freedom. Free—but what a frightful liberty! Chains, bondage, persecution, are as nought when a pure breast feels no pang of remorse agitating the heaven of conscious innocence. But when that purity is so sensitive that it finds guilt in its own unintended complicity with evil, and self-reproach springs from every reflection on the past, then is the mind wretched in proportion as it is virtuous. And so now did Erilda sink at once from the frail eminence of delight into woe's most intense abyss. She viewed herself as the guiltiest wretch that lived. A murderer for her lord—an impostor for her husband—her infant son a spurious outcast—herself wilfully blinded to the horrid reality by some impulsive and sinful instinct, which did not revolt her the less from its being involuntary and abhorrent to her better feelings. Such were the pangs which assailed her heart when the first accusation uttered by Freda fell on her harrowed mind; when in one moment of agony, fears, doubts, and self-upbraidings, swept confusedly across her brain like fiends rushing at the waving of some wizard's wand. Many circumstances, which at their occurrence passed unheeded, now returned in groups of terror. While separate, they were as nought—when combined, a torrent of agony. His dream—his vacant memory on slight points of fact and as to indifferent persons—his inflamed cheek and angry look when she first mentioned the name of Rudolf in natural antipathy—these and the like reflections, coming quick on the identified fact of such a murder, caused a shock which might have broken the hardest heart. Yet she bore it for awhile all meek and gentle as she was, but it was too much for long endurance. The third day after the dreadful discovery saw her stretched

helpless on a bed of suffering—fever in her blood and phrensy in her brain.

The hour of trial at length arrived. The judges, in all the ferocious anxiety for conviction natural to those times, but foreign to the notion of ours, had taken their places, surrounded with armed men, and armed in all the terrors of military power. The prisoner too was there, loaded with chains and guarded by grim gaolers, while the headsman stood by, axe in hand, and personifying all the horrors of torture and execution. The crowds, who were by special indulgence admitted to the court of trial, gazed on the dignified mien and haughty demeanour of the culprit, but shrank back as he was led along, from the touch of his very garments, while the rattling of his chains made them quake with fear. A gathering horror crept through the hall. A total stillness reigned around, broken only by the clank of the fetters as the prisoner moved his shackled limbs, or by the hollow echoings which rang outside, from the hammers with which the workmen fastened the planks and beams of the scaffold.

The process of trial, as was too common in criminal matters during the feudal times, was prompt. Ere the opening forms were begun the minds of the judges were made up, and the anticipated sentence already ran through the throng. Every one knew the proofs to be adduced, and no one dreamt of sifting evidence or reconciling discrepancies. In an age of blood acquittal was but disappointment, and the sublime maxim of holy writ on which the theory of our own law is founded was then wholly overlooked or despised. But in the present case the most sceptical was satisfied. Guilt seemed as fully established as the broad light of day. The blood-stiffened braid of black hair was of the very shade of the prisoner's. The murderer's foot-prints in the turf were exactly the same as his. Other circumstantial proofs have been already noticed ; and it was agreed by all that sufficient time was allowed between the perpetration of the murder and the assassin's escape by the winding ways through the wood towards the castle, from which he was seen running with Erilda on the alarm being given. These were in themselves evidence sufficient. But when the trembling Freda was led along into the court, pale and in tears, drooping her lovely head like a withered lily, the loud sighs and sobs of the beholders—all

unheard by her—were quickly followed by murmurs of vengeance and calls for judgment. Her presence was conclusive proof.

The prisoner had hitherto maintained a total silence. But when he saw this last and loveliest witness, he struck his forehead with his clenched hand, and deeply groaning, exclaimed "Fate is too strong for me!" He closed his eyes for a moment, and his head sank on his breast. It was but for one moment, for in the next he sprang up, as if indignant at the complaint thus wrung from him. His pale eyes beamed in the seeming lustre of suffering virtue, and, like an arch fixed firmer by every increase of pressure, he gained strength from each additional load of obloquy and wrong. The awe-struck observers gazed on him, marvelling how so fiend-like a being could thus bear the aspect of a demi-god. Freda, obeying the commands of the judges, began to answer their questions in the words of her formerly-told recital; but the impatience of the people would not wait for this, to their minds, unnecessary formality. Yells and threats burst out all around; and the judges, hurried away by the violence of the crowd and the sympathy of their own excited passions, pronounced the sentence of death, which decreed agonies of torture and excesses of ignominy to the doomed body of the culprit, that make men of the present time shudder and blush, for what their species was in those dark and bloody days. The prisoner heard the sentence and the infuriate shouts by which it was hailed, but he stood unmoved, like a rock lashed by the frantic waves, and as calm as that wide tract of ocean which remains perpetually still, though thunder roars and lightnings flash without cessation above its waves.

The headsman and his assistants laid their coarse hands on their prey, and with triumphant delight they were about to lead him to the adjoining room where the rack stood ready—the crowd poured out towards this place of exhibition—the judges prepared to quit the judgment-seat—when, rising above the many discordant sounds, a loud voice was heard, crying out in piercing tones, "Mercy!—justice!—he is innocent!"

The interruption was so unlooked for, and the assertion so startling, that curiosity and wonder for a moment overmastered the eager longing for blood and the desire of vengeance.

Free passage was made for a man who burst through the throng, and it was soon discovered that it was Rupert of Stalbach who forced his onward way, and threw himself at the feet of the judges. "Mercy for me! and justice for him!" cried the suppliant, with convulsed voice, while his haggard looks and blood-shot eyes bore witness to his past and present suffering; "For him against whom hell has worked in vain. No! It could not be that truth, honour, and innocence should fall beneath the stroke of infamy. Off with his dishonouring chains! Read in his noble countenance if he be a parricide and an impostor! Wonder at if ye must, but also obey the words of Heaven, speaking truth and fact through me its unworthy instrument! And pity me if ye will while urged on by my remorse thus to load my own name with infamy! Oh, Harold—deeply injured as thou hast been—fix not thine eyes thus terribly upon me! their last glance drove me to desperation—they now fill me with despair! It was not I that dealt the blow—no, there, there he stands, whose parricidal arm struck down thy father and his own—while I stood aloof, as criminal but less bloody!"

With unsteady hand he here pointed to a man whose towering height made him easily recognised among the crowd, but whose slouched cap and whose mantle held high had hitherto concealed his face from observation. Those around him shrunk back at Rupert's words; but a better spirit encouraging some, they sprang upon him as he attempted to escape, and in spite of his vigorous resistance they overpowered him and dragged his concealment aside. One glance broke the long mystery! Judges, gaolers, guards, and every individual of the promiscuous crowd, threw with wild wonder their looks from this new captive to him whose death-march had for a moment been halted—then back again with a new intensity of amaze—turning first from the demoniac villain denounced by Rupert, to his living likeness Sir Harold of Sternfels—and then back from him to Rudolf of the Hartz!

Order and form were completely overturned in the assemblage. The first impulse was now to list to Rupert's completion of the confession, so incoherently begun, that the darkest part of the mystery might be explained. Broken in upon by sobs and sighs which seemed to ease his overloaded breast, the repentant reprobate proceeded in his connectless, but still convincing revelation. His first efforts went to ex-

tenuate his own early errors. He spoke with a bitter penitence of what was past ; and a flood of tears rushed out as he alluded to the long-enjoyed friendship of those whom he had so successfully laboured to render wretched and to destroy. "At length," said he, "when I had reached the very brink of ruin, Sir Harold returned alive and well, to snatch from me the enjoyment of that inheritance on which I felt myself on the point of becoming possessed. My mind, prepared for any delusion that seemed to stay off for ever so little the impending ruin, eagerly received the notion that it was indeed an impostor that had returned to Sternfels. I attempted to dislodge him ; and even then, when struck almost dumb by that single glance, which would have brought conviction to any one to whom it did not at the same time bring despair, I refused to admit or own the truth. When justice even decided against my accusations and established his identity, I only became more wilfully blind. Then came revenge, dire progeny of shame and rage, and I revelled for awhile, but yet guiltless, in that dark delight, the worst of man's worse thoughts. It was at this crisis of my career that yonder miscreant sought and found me. He found me, alas ! ready moulded for his purpose—ready to enter into complicity with his most hideous crimes—but still not daring to do the last fell deed."——

"Peace, babbling and recreant wretch !" exclaimed, in a voice of horrid strength, the pre-eminent villain of the strange drama now being acted, "Peace ! nor mention deeds which even in name make you tremble. For me these themes are more fit ; and by me they shall be fitly treated ; for I have laughed through life at the puling distinctions of morality, and never yet bent my knee to man or God. My heart has been of flint, girded with a belt of ice—as hard as it was cold ; a suitable whetstone to the iron-beaked bird of Hecla ! Thus nature threw me forth, and my deeds may tell if I ever strove to thwart nature. Death, I see, is now in waiting, but ere I quit this life I must leave some records of myself that my fame may not be belied. First, know ye then, I am sprung from no word-hallowed and time-honoured source. My mother was the ruined victim of him whom I only knew to be my father that I might hate him, for her sake and my own. Vice and guilt were my heritage and were close grafted in my nature. I owed all this to my father. Was not the

debt duly paid? Is not the account duly balanced? I sprang from him—by me he fell! He gave me life and infamy—I struck him down! Ere I could lisp the name of father, mine had abandoned me to despair. He married, and yonder wretch, my twice-escaped victim, was born to brand me the deeper with disgrace. My mother loved me with boundless warmth. She lavished learning, accomplishments, and gold upon me; I asked not how the latter became hers. Bad and bold, I knew my shame, for her first lessons were those of loathing and abhorrence to the name of sire and brother.

“My mother died. Friendless and without resources but those of my own mind, I plunged on my career, and followed it through scenes too varied to picture now. *He* came across my path! The steel that had so long and so well served me failed of its office when turned against his hated heart. He fell under my blows, but not mortally hurt. I arose from the fight, a prisoner, with the alternative of slavery as a Christian, or wealth and dignities as a Turk. I did not hesitate. I became a renegade to Christian forms. I knew no faith, and cross and crescent were to me alike. Believing my victim to have perished among the noteless slain, for his body could no where be found, I sunk in indolence. No thought of him came on my voluptuous course; and luxury and love bent their subtle allurements to turn me aside from the best part of my design.

“Years rolled along. A Christian slave first brought to me the news of Harold of Sternfels having escaped from a long captivity, and of his being returned to his happy home. The scathing tidings fell like lightning on my scorched heart. I knew no peace until I set out once again to Germany to mar, at least, the bliss that I was not destined to share. This slave had also informed me of the great struggle against the newly returned lord of Sternfels by his greedy kinsman. To him, therefore, I first addressed myself on reaching the scene of my few but not wholly fruitless exploits. Taking advantage of his first astonishment at my miraculous resemblance, I opened all my plans, and dwelt mainly on his own fall from fame and importance to odium and misery. His rankling mind was well fitted for my purpose. We calculated our expected gains, and arranged our plot.

“Our first notion was to send Harold alone to his grave; but the death of the old man held out a double prospect of

ambition and revenge. My coward partner dared not be the complete villain he wished to be ! He refused to strike the blow—I struck it, and had Harold died as we hoped by—justice!—I had soon appeared as the true heir, and divided the spoils with the base recreant who has betrayed me.

“One circumstance seemed to seal our success, the coming of yonder pale-faced girl to mark me in my hour of filial vengeance. My heart leaped upwards in ardent longing to plunge my weapon in her breast. But I staid the blow that she might be the surest evidence against her father. And when I came here to glut my eyes on his agonies, I little dreamt of this ending to all. But his escape is dearly bought. No sire to chant a hymn of triumph—his wife frantic, it may be dying—and the poisoned barb of blasted hope festering in his heart.

“I have spoken ! Let me be now known for what I was. I stood alone in the world, hating it, and now die its unrelenting foe. But one act of justice shall close and dignify my course—there ! to thy dastard heart, caitiff !” And with the utterance of these words, so abruptly ending his speech, he darted through the unsuspecting throng full upon Rupert, seized him by the hair, with one hand, and with the other plunged a dagger in his breast. The poniard felt its fleshy sheath—the writhing man gasped in short agony—the blood mounted to his throat, and his glazed eyes upturned in death.

The desperate murderer next raised the reeking blade to strike at his own heart ; but no, his race of blood was run ! The rushing throng arrested his arm, and the final blow was left for justice to strike. The rack was at hand. He was dragged out, and fast descending strokes of torture were plainly heard—but no groan came with them to tell that they fell on mortal form.

And now loud shouts were heard outside, and a female figure conducted by the joyous crowd came rapidly on, the flush of fever making her eyes more bright, and heightening her natural charms. It may well be guessed that it was Erilda whom nought could hinder from the half delirious bliss, of hurrying from her fevered couch, to hail with fond embrace the triumph of him whom her searching glances soon discover. He sprang forward to meet her salutation, and flung his still shackled arms around her, while she strained the double captive in folds of love stronger than the fetters by which he was yet for a moment bound.

THE TRAGEDY OF THE TRUENFELS.

A LEGEND WITHOUT A DATE.

IN one of the wild and thickly wooded valleys of the Rhine, in a spot as desolate as the story connected with it is dismal, are still to be seen some crumbling ruins of what was once a plain but handsome chapel. Half concealed with moss and brambles, and rising above a steep crag close to these ruins, the fragments of a tomb are yet in evidence. The word *Liba*, in German characters is plainly legible. Several other broken words are scarcely distinguishable, but they tell no story of the tenant that has for centuries mouldered below. Tradition, however, has preserved one. The name of the place is Truenfels; and both monument and chapel were erected to the memory of a maiden who died in the flower of youth, hundreds of years ago.

In the neighbourhood of this dreary spot lived an old knight named Sir Balther of the Mount, with Liba, his only daughter. This daughter was so lovely and so amiable, that several of the young nobles, whose families then possessed, and whose castles ornamented, the district of the Seven Mountains, entered into brisk rivalry for the possession of her hand. But Sir Balther had promised it to Sibert of Ulenthal, and Liba had shown no objection to the match. Had her father indeed destined her for the oldest, ugliest, and most ill-tempered of her suitors, this pattern of filial obedience had not murmured, however she might have mourned. It may well then be believed with what pleasure she confirmed her parent's choice of the handsomest, kindest and bravest youth of the country.

Sir Balther, who was proud and fierce, like most of his brother feudatories, had been for years in constant enmity with the Archbishop of Cologne, of whom he was the vassal. His fiery spirit lost no opportunity of raising fresh quarrels,

and his haughty temper neither brooked injury nor concealed anger. One day, during the access of one of his frequent fits of enmity against the prelate, he entertained at his castle a company of friends, all deeply imbued with his own feelings. Young Sibert alone was absent from the feast, from some accidental cause.

As the heating effects of large potations of Rhine-wine fermented the blood of the inflammable company, explosions of rage took place, all directed against the absent archbishop, and destined to be too fatally followed up.

"How," cried Schott of Grunstein, "could mortal man, much less a spurred and belted knight, submit to this exaction? To claim my kine, my sheep, the very lambs yet unweaned! To force from me at once both lay tribute and clerical tithes! By Heavens, it is too bad! It must not, it cannot be borne!"

"No — no more than his insult to my honour," exclaimed Hugo of Wolfsbratten, "slighted by him in the very church. The torch which I held in the procession refused his blessing, because it was carried by *me*! Me, whose blood is, methinks, more pure than his, whose shield bears quarterings" —

"Tut, tut, brother," interrupted the old lord of Swalbach, "what is this grievance compared to mine? No priest, no prince, no pope even could bear attain to the honour of Wolfsbratten — but has not yon proud prelate torn my very squire from my protection? And does he not lie this hour imprisoned in Cologne?"

"Ay, and has he not lowered my banner from the cathedral choir, and whitewashed the wall in the place where it hung?" vociferated Ulrich von Zwammelthorp, at the same time striking the table with his clenched fist, so as to make goblets, flasks, and glasses dance, in a fashion that was certainly common enough to the drinking-bouts of those and later days.

The climax of outrage and indignity announced by the last speaker threw the listeners completely off their centre. It was bad enough to distrain cattle for dues, to refuse a benediction to the torch of an obnoxious intruder, to imprison the roaring partizan of a turbulent freebooter; but to sweep away the cobweb from a banner of nobility, and whitewash the filth which it had for half a century concealed and fostered, was indeed too bad! The boisterous conspirators — for such they

were to a man — broke all bounds of decorum or prudence, and uttered the most uncompromising threats of vengeance. A dozen different plans for carrying those threats into execution were proposed by as many different voices ; and all were confounded by an uproar of feudal clamour. One talked of a public manifesto against the various instances of wrong. Another insisted on a declaration of rights. A third recommended a league of the injured lords, offensive and defensive. A fourth urged an immediate levy of men, and a war of desperation.

Sir Balther, as in duty bound, listened with as much patience as he could command to the outbursts of his choleric and rebellious guests ; and having, from his situation as host, been able to preserve his head rather more clear than the rest, he had sense enough to see that all these parallel proposals, though tending towards the same object, were none of them coming or able to come to the point. He therefore made a signal for silence, but that obtained little success. He next roared, at the topmost pitch of his voice, a request to be heard. But his proposal was drowned among the rest. He next devised a plan which succeeded in stopping for a moment the mouths of the party. He filled his glass, and raised it, intimating that he was about to propose a toast ; and while all drained the last drops of their goblets to the animating sentiment of "Death to our archbishop and arch enemy !" the president seized the opportunity to deliver himself of the following pithy speech :—

"Brother knights, my very esteemed guests, ye are all but a pack of asses ! What do you, and I, and all of us want ? Revenge ? How is it to be obtained ? By treaties and leagues, and proclamations ? No — but by action, instant, immediate, desperate action ! Our persecuting enemy is this very day absent from Cologne — this very hour at Urbach, consecrating the new church — will be this very night on his way back to the stronghold of his tyranny. Shall he ever reach it alive ? A hundred bold men-at-arms can overpower his unprepared guard, taken by surprise, and probably half drunk. Shall the archbishop then ever reach home alive ? "

"Never, never ! We swear it, we swear it !" was the solemn answer uttered in full deep chorus ; and every one instantly sobered by the terrible solemnity of the pledge, they hastened off, to gather each his quota of followers, agreeing on a certain place of rendezvous — where all in due time met.

That night the Archbishop of Cologne was a corpse. Waylaid and surprised, his escort made a feeble resistance ; and he found no mercy, having rarely shown any to his enemies.

The emperor for the time being, often the just avenger of crime, as often the upholder of wrong, but in most cases moved by their 'direct or indirect influence on his own prerogatives, saw in this transaction a flagrant violation of law, justice, and authority, and resolved to make a terrible example of the offenders. Within a few weeks from the night of the archbishop's murder almost every one of the confederates died on the scaffold, or were hung on gibbets erected on the scene of their crime. The confessions of several threw the chief blame on Sir Balther. He had not yet been made amenable to justice — or vengeance, with which it is so often confounded. On hearing of the arrest and execution of his accomplices, he put his castle into the best state of defence ; and as he hoped for no mercy he resolved to sell his life as dearly as he could.

No one, whether a friend or foe of the unfortunate archbishop or his unlucky enemies, was more shocked or grieved at these events than young Sibert of Ulenthal. He thanked Heaven and his patron saint full many a time that he had been absent from the fatal party at which the plot was laid, and at his being thus preserved, to save at least his beloved Liba from the destruction to which her too guilty father was doomed. He repaired to the court of the emperor, obtained an audience, threw himself at his feet, and implored his imperial permission to accompany the force destined for the attack and destruction of Sir Balther's castle, and to bear away harmless the innocent daughter to whom he was affianced, although the utmost excess of ruin and certain death was inviolably decreed against the father.

It would be long to tell and tedious to describe the preparations made for the attack of Sir Balther's almost impregnable retreat, impregnable at least in days before the invention of gunpowder allowed the blasting mine to spring beneath security's feet, or the bursting shower of shells and rockets to fall on the doomed heads of the besieged. But many a bold squadron and platoon was marched forward to the enterprise. Machines of powerful effect battered the castle walls, and javelins, stones, and arrows, did great destruction on the small but desperate garrison. Sir Balther on his part was not

idle, and much slaughter was done on the lines of the exasperated imperialists.

The bold Sir Balther was constantly exposed, as he led on sorties against his assailants or reconnoitred their approaches from his towers and battlements. He was lucky enough to escape even without a wound ; but one day he received a shock greater than any that could be effected by the worst missile on perceiving young Sibert of Ulenthal in the enemy's ranks. He could scarcely believe his eyes ; and to confirm their evidence he called Liba to his side. She too saw this apparent proof of her lover's worse than desertion — for his presence there spoke breach of honour as well as of affection. Sir Balther's bold nerves became more firmly braced at sight of what he thought a new enemy. The gentle Liba was differently affected. She sunk insensible in her father's arms, was carried in that state to her chamber, and only revived to the full conviction of her misery.

In the mean while young Sibert, filled with new hope at the partial sight of his mistress, advanced towards the walls with outstretched arms, and endeavoured to express by his gestures that he was come to save her and bear her from the dreadful fate that impended over the other inmates of the castle. Sir Balther allowed him to approach within certain range of an arrow, and seizing the bow from the hands of an archer close by him, he discharged the flying weapon with unerring aim.

"That for thy traitorous heart !" cried he, as the bow-string twanged and the arrow cut through the air.

"Thank heaven, he has it !" was the next exclamation as the weapon too surely struck its mark. Sibert was carried off to the besiegers' camp. Sir Balther took care speedily to inform the wretched Liba of his exploit. Her despair was now complete. And the fury of the contest between besiegers and besieged reached a greater height than ever.

Within ten days from this event the castle was reduced to the last extremity. The scaling ladders of the foe were fairly planted against the walls. One after another its works were carried ; and at length on one night of gloom and storm the very body of the place was in the power of the imperialists. A final assault made them masters of all ; and slaughter, pillage, and devastation were to be seen throughout, by the blaze of the fire, which in every part consumed the massive building.

The beautiful Liba would willingly have met death at the hands of the foe. But she dared not venture to encounter their libertine fury. Half dressed, with flowing hair, and trembling steps, she fled therefore to the refuge of her father's protection. Traversing corridors and halls which resounded with the shouts of the victors, and where at every step she encountered the dead or the dying glaring in the fierce light of the conflagration, she at last reached a distant court yard and there perceived her father desperately fighting with his last few adherents against fearful odds. Just as she was darting to his side, to share the fate he braved, her arm was forcibly caught in the grasp of a man, and in a moment he drew her to him and clasped her to his breast.

"Oh! mercy, mercy!" cried she. "Strike me to the heart, but spare my honour!"

"Liba, dost thou not know me?" murmured a voice which even then spoke not in vain to her heart's sympathies. It was Sibert, who but partly recovered from his wound, but still faint and ailing, had left the camp and braved the perils of the assault, unarmed save by the inspiring passion on which he reckoned to bear him safe.

"Sibert! not dead? O Heaven pity me! my brain wanders. They told me thou wert dead—killed by my father's hand!"

"No, Liba, I live for thee and love. All may now be well. Thy father's cruel weapon rankled in my breast, but thy image was there before it to neutralize the barbed point. Now fly, fly, my beloved! I am not, as thou seest, an enemy. I have the emperor's full pardon for thee—his commands to snatch thee hence. Turn, Liba, turn with me from this horrid scene."

"And my father?"

"Oh, name him not in such an hour as this! The ban is on his head—nothing may save him—and all that aid, abet, or linger near him are doomed to inevitable ruin!"

"Then welcome ruin! Farewell, Sibert, for ever!" exclaimed Liba, springing from the ineffectual grasp of her distracted lover, and gaining with a bound the side of her desperate parent.

"Ah, my child! my dear daughter!" cried the old warrior, forgetting even his furious revenge in beholding her whom he

had quite given up for lost ; and he dropped his sword's point and threw wide the arm that held his protecting shield that he might freely receive her as she threw herself on his breast. The very ruffians who had assailed him, reeking with blood and hot for slaughter, paused awhile from their fell work, and gazed on the affecting scene of filial and paternal love.

"Now welcome death indeed ! Oh it is happiness to escape disgrace and die thus with thee, my father !" exclaimed Liba, hanging on Sir Balther's neck and embracing him wildly.

"Take them alive !" cried the commander of the foes, who now prepared to resume their attack. "Let no weapon touch them on peril of your heads ! Torture and the gallows for the old man — but the girl is my prize !"

"Fly, father ! Dearest father, fly !" exclaimed Liba, as Sir Balther, throwing his shield before him, rushed once more upon his enemies. She clung to his arm and prevented his advance, still imploring him to fly.

"Fly, girl ! Where ? There is no safety but in desperation and death ! Look at the flames that everywhere burst out ? Come on, cowards ! come on !"

"Father, father, you see they will not fight with you. Oh, plunge your sword into my breast sooner than let me fall into their hands !"

"That I cannot do, by Heavens !" replied the old Chieftain. "Thou art at this moment the living portrait of thy mother. I cannot kill her child !" and he once more caught his daughter in his arms, and strained her with a fierce emotion to his breast.

"O fly, then ; there is yet an opening down there to the vaults !" cried Liba, endeavouring to lead him to the archway, through which a narrow passage seemed yet left between the flame and smoke that burst out at either side.

"Away then, away, ere I repent me of my own dishonour, which now I prefer to thine !" exclaimed the father, at the same time flinging his shield and sword with desperate force at the group of enemies who stood before him, their weapons pointed out to keep him at bay. In the same instant, snatching the cloak from a dead body at his foot, he wrapped it round Liba, and before the lookers on had time to recover from their amaze, both father and daughter disappeared in the open archway.

"Pursue them, pursue—and bring back the girl alive!" cried the hoarse voice of the commander; but his orders were unavailing. Just as the men rushed forward the beams and masonry of the archway fell with a loud crash. A volume of smoke, flame, and dust rose thickly up; and no one doubted but that the chieftain and his daughter had perished.

But fate had not quite let fall its heavy hand on the destitute pair. • Forcing their way along, they reached the subterranean vaults, but not both unharmed. Liba, securely wrapped in the dead soldier's cloak, was unscathed by the fire through which she passed. Sir Balther, without such shelter, was grievously scorched. His eyes felt as though portions of the flame had settled in them. His agony was great; and but for his daughter's sake he had lain down at once and waited for death, which had now been welcome come in what shape it might.

Wandering on at random, for Sir Balther could not see his way through the subterranean windings which he knew so well, and Liba was quite ignorant of their intricate paths, they at length reached an outlet. It admitted them into the deep forest which surrounded the castle at a short distance; and the flames from the burning pile allowed the half sinking and half maddened girl to see sufficiently before her and prevent any accident to her father or herself from the unequal and obstructed soil. Worn out at length with exertion of body and mind, she sank on the earth, and slept in spite of all her suffering, her agonized parent watching her—yet almost hoping for her sake and his own that she might never more awake, for were her sorrows ended by death, he felt that then he too might die.

The songs of birds, the bright smiles of the morning sun, the pure breath of the early breeze, the fragrance of opening flowers, formed the combination of natural delights which broke on Liba's awakening senses. For a moment all seemed as if she lay in paradise. But memory is to wretchedness what conscience is to guilt—both ever ready to drag their victims back to the view of what the one has done and the other suffered. 'Tis the happy alone who revel in oblivion. Even virtue is denied the enjoyment, if sorrow has once crossed its path.

And Liba, now alive to a full consciousness of her own woes, found her only chance of temporary forgetfulness in the con-

temptation of her father's desolate and dreadful state. Roused to exertion by the sacred duty of solacing his sufferings, she led him farther into the forest, gathered plants whose soothing qualities were known to her, and applied them to his burning eyes, sought water to quench his thirst, made a bed of leaves and moss on which he might strive to repose, and gathered wild fruits and berries to allay the cravings of nature. For, utterly despairing as were both parent and child; they still clung to life, though had death been offered by other hands than their own they would each have joyfully embraced it.

For several days they thus existed; having discovered in the wilderness a cave that sheltered them from the wind and rain, and secured them from all danger of discovery. In this state of living burial, they continued, Sir Balthier being wholly blind, and Liba exhausting every means of subsistence afforded by the wild vicinage of their sanctuary.

Forced to extend her wanderings in search of these scanty supplies, she one day descried the figure of a man pensively leaning against a tree. Terror kept her motionless for a moment, and fixed her gaze upon him. It was Sibert, who pursued in almost utter hopelessness his daily task of seeking the fugitives, whom he alone persisted in believing not to have been destroyed,—true to that instinct (so often an infatuation) that will not let lovers loose their hold of hope.

Liba's first impulse was to call on Sibert's name and fling herself into his arms. But an instant's thought repelled the natural suggestion of her heart. "No," thought she, "he at least shall not be involved in our ruin—he shall not be sacrificed by the contagion of our touch!" And retiring unperceived, she retraced her steps to the dreary cavern which was now her only home.

Thus had she three times voluntarily renounced the beloved object of her pure passion, on grounds of as pure principle; first, in the belief of his infidelity to her father's cause; secondly, rather than abandon that parent to secure her own safety; and lastly, to avoid compromising this adored lover in the destruction to which they were doomed. Such generous devotion surely merited reward. Let us hope that it received an ample share,—but it was not on this earth!

Wound up by this stretch of forbearance to that state of overstrained buoyancy which the martyrs of virtue fancy to be

happiness, Liba returned to her father, with a light step, a beaming countenance, and a beating heart. Her fancied triumph over the natural impulses of her heart was soon however sinking into despondency. But any token of despair was for the instant averted by her father's proposing, for the first time, to quit his retreat and breathe the open air. Taking Liba's hand in his, he said, "I know not how it is with me to-day, my child, but I feel a something I cannot describe which calls me into the sight of heaven. It is as though a feeling from the skies (which, alas! I must never see) urged me forth. I am irresistibly impelled to obey this call. It is like a noiseless summons from on high. Come then, Liba, lead me into the sunshine, though I may not know its brightness! The day is clear and serene, is it not?"

"'Tis sultry, my father, rather than serene. But the blue sky is only disfigured by one dark cloud, which will no doubt pass quickly away."

"Lead me then to the blessed beams of light, that I may feel them warm my chilled heart once more."

"This way then, my father—this way to the lone grey rock which stands singly in the forest, and whence one may see the blue waters of the Rhine—oh! forgive me, my father—I forgot thy misfortune!"

"Nay, nay, Liba, I see them too—as I see thee, my girl, in the deep clear stream of memory, bright and clear and pure—come on, come on to the sunshine!"

When they emerged from the gloomy thicket, Sir Balther felt the sun's rays, and turned up his sightless balls as if longing to see the day-god which thus revived him. "Art thou safe here, Liba?" asked he, after a moment's pause. "Is there no chance of some straggler of our persecutors wandering this way? Hast thou seen no one on thy walks in search of food?"

"No enemy, father, has met my view since the fatal night of the assault."

"Then hast thou seen no one, my child, for to a proscribed and ruined man like me all become enemies even if they were friends before!"

Liba had now reached the rock, and her father sat down on a projecting fragment, basking in the genial rays which fell so warmly there. In a moment the sky was overcast—the dark and solitary cloud remarked by Liba had reached the

place where she and Sir Balthar sat, and threw its deep shadow down upon them. At the same time a few large drops fell heavily from it. These were instantly followed by a flash of lightning and a simultaneous crash that told how terribly close was the thunderbolt. Both father and daughter fell dead to the earth.

Sibert of Ulenthal was close to the spot. He had caught a view of Liba when she thought she escaped unobserved ; had tracked her to the cavern ; had thence followed her and her father through the thicket, overheard their short conversation, and was on the point of springing forward to throw himself before them and announce the emperor's pardon, of which he was the bearer. Stunned for a few seconds by the fatal flash, but rushing forward as soon as he recovered his presence of mind, he saw two corpses where he a minute before had marked the two living beings in whose fate his whole happiness was centered. Sir Balthar was blackened and burned. Liba showed no visible mark of Heaven's wrath. For a moment her lover believed her still to live. She lived in immortality, but lay in death.

The tomb and the chapel were erected by the orders of Sibert on the site of this deep tragedy. The body of Liba was deposited in the tomb. Sibert took possession of the little chapel and an adjoining building, where he passed the rest of his desolate career, in mourning for her death and preparing for his own.

THE

PRISONER OF THE PFALZ.

ONE of the most striking, if not the most picturesque, objects of the voyage of the Rhine is the fort-like building called the Pfalzgrafenstein, or, more commonly and briefly, the Pfalz. It is situated on an island nearly central in the river, between the towns of Canb and Bacharach ; and the stream presenting at this point one of those frequent illusions which so diversify its beauties, this tower has been sometimes designated the Castle in the Lake. Such indeed is the appearance of the river in this place ; and the stillness of land and water, the encircling hills, and impenetrable woods, give an air of solemn security, well suited to the purposes for which the building was employed during many an age ; namely, as a prison at times for state criminals, but more usually as a place for another species of *confinement*—that of the successive countesses palatines, whose accouchements, in order to give the heir a legal title to his inheritance, were to be there effected. This regulation, which now appears but an absurd ordinance, was no doubt connected with some reasons of state, if we may so dignify the coarse and capricious motives which influenced the chieftains of feudality.

High above the river, and looking down from a rugged battlement of rocks behind the town of Canb, are the ruins of Gutenfels, an old castle, which some centuries ago bore the title of *Cube*, but it was new named to its present appellation, in compliment to the Countess Guda, of the ancient line of Nuringen, an heiress of surpassing beauty, who had not only the honour of softening for awhile the hard heart, and becoming the wife, of Hermann, Count Palatine, but of making a conquest of a still more elevated lover, if at least the romantic

traditions of the Rhine speak truly. But the honour of an alliance with principedom was dearly purchased by the drawback on happiness sequent on a union with a haughty, violent, and despotic man, double her own age, without sympathy for her virtues, or soul for her charms ; and whose only aim in his choice was the pride of possessing the most lovely woman of her day, or some passing desire that rather degraded than ennobled its object.

For three years after her marriage the countess bore her fate without a murmur, for conscience told her she had alone herself to blame. But she hushed her self-reproaches even, by recollecting the motives which had urged her to consent to the match. In the innocence and inexperience of youth, she had believed that the happiness of her suitor had depended on it ; and she had herself formed no attachment at the time which would have taught her feelings the difference between the spurious passion of the palatine, and that real one, to compare it with which is blasphemy against the heart's divinity. But never had a woman in her station, or a wife so irreproachable, to bear such indignities of suspicion and jealousy as fell to the lot of the Countess Guda. Privations of all kinds were forced on her. None of the enjoyments of high rank were allowed her, and the delights of humble life were incompatible with it. Rarely seen by even her husband's courtiers or dependants, the fame of her beauty and her goodness spread nevertheless far and wide. She became the theme of many a lay of romantic eulogy, and several enthusiasts fancied themselves, in the fashion of the day, enamoured of one only known to them through the haze of an over-heated fancy. It was even reported that the emperor, whose romantic turn of mind caught readily at any new subject of excitement, had contrived to gain a stolen view of the all but imprisoned countess, and had become in consequence one of her most ardent admirers.

It was at least certain that about the time of this report a pressing invitation reached the castle of Stahleck, not far from Gutenfels, on the opposite bank of the Rhine, where the palatine resided, praying Count Hermann and his fair but unfortunate partner to repair to the imperial court on a visit, for which grand preparations were made, and every inducement to its acceptance held out. But in vain. The morose and

jealous palatine, who had never himself sought honours or pleasures, was determined that his wife should not risk the consequences which they too often bring in their train. Without confidence in himself, he could not have any in his wife, for the one is the offspring of the other; and doubt of her fidelity was (as it always is in like cases) a sure proof of consciousness in his own demerit. The imperial invitation, which an inferior prince could not directly refuse, was eluded under various frivolous pretexts; and the close guardianship of the countess was more rigorously than ever attended to by the special care of Ludwig, the palatine's younger brother, and the heir presumptive to his honours, for the ill assorted union had not been followed by the birth of any child. But in proportion as the seclusion of the hapless Guda became more and more severe, the sympathy she excited beyond the pale of her palace-prison increased, and numerous instances, which never came to her knowledge, proved how individual gallantry and still higher feelings were interested in her cause, while each new display of the kind on the part of strangers carried a fresh reproach to him who knew her best, and ought to have honoured and cherished her the most.

But all the retainers of the court of the palatine, who had opportunities of seeing the princess at all, were struck with and astonished by the sudden change which at this period took place in her manners and feelings. Instead of the placid but pensive endurance of ill which had hitherto characterised her, she became suddenly animated and cheerful, and her spirits seemed to rise in a ratio with the increase of the means pursued by her tyrants—for she had two—to keep them down. The conjectures of courtiers were not likely in those days, any more than they might be in our own, to give any interpretation favourable to morality or virtue. Some secret passion was imagined to be the only possible cause of such a magical change, and a circumstance ere long discovered turned suspicion into certainty, even in the minds of those most disposed to think well of the countess, or who had had courage enough to uphold her character before.

One evening when the sun had just sunk below the hills which rose high behind the palace of Stahleck, and the mountain woods began to throw down their mysterious shadows on the river, Guda chose, as was her wont, to wander in the

pleasure-grounds and gardens, as if to contrast her own gay and joyous bearing with the sadness of the melancholy hour. Whether solitude was her object we cannot now stop to inquire ; but be that as it may, she was not left long to the lone indulgence of her fancy. She was now, as on most occasions, narrowly watched and closely followed. Ludwig, her unkind brother-in-law, and Hugo von Roth, his devoted creature, were both soon on her track ; and ere long they reached the close neighbourhood of a bower, where they had instant evidence of her presence, but in a way that startled while it delighted them.

Even these two anxious evil-wishers of the countess, and both therefore disposed to believe ill of her, were struck with amaze at hearing her impassioned conversation with a man, whose voice they knew not. Recovering themselves quickly, they approached still closer ; and cautiously peeping through the foliage, they saw the intrusive interloper on the wedded privileges of the Count Palatine on one knee before Countess Guda, holding her hand in his, and pressing it with fervour to his lips ; while she, in extreme agitation, strove to raise him up, and urged him to fly the dangerous place.

"Oh, begone ! begone !" cried she, in accents almost suffocated, with what kind of emotion the listeners could not distinguish, but they imagined it. "Utter ruin to us both must result from your being discovered."

"I ask no happier fate than ruin at thy feet !" replied the unknown, whose face was buried in the folds of the countess's dress.

"And *mine* ? Oh, you know not how my fate, my happiness is at stake," said she, reproachfully, but not severely.

"Ah, it is thy danger that alone terrifies me—but he, thy tyrant, I will not call him thy husband, is absent from the castle."

"Yes, but his odious brother, Count Ludwig, and *his* hateful minion, Von Roth, are close at hand."

"Ay, traitress, ay ! closer than you dreamt of, to vindicate your husband's honour and slay your seducer in your very arms !" exclaimed the furious Ludwig, attempting to burst through the branches in which he was entangled ; while Von Roth, less passionate and more calculating, took another course to intercept the stranger, should he attempt to fly, as in fact he did with the natural activity of one to whom discovery was

likely to bring the most frightful punishment to a man of feeling—the dishonour of her he loved.

“Now, false one!” continued Ludwig, when he had succeeded in forcing a passage into the bower, and forgetting for a moment the fugitive, in the triumph of having detected the intrigue which was to fix his expectations into surety—“Now, thy doom is sealed, and my inheritance secure! Thou art caught in the fact—thy joyous air, thy secret wanderings are all explained—and ‘the odious’ Ludwig is master of thy destiny. Now, instantly confess the name of thy paramour—tell me, who was he that fled?”

“That thou shalt never know!” said Guda, in a firm tone.

“Indeed! my injured brother will soon find means to force the guilty secret from thee.”

“Never! nor is the secret one of guilt, nor is he injured,” continued Guda.

“Ha, ha, ha! profligacy and sophistry—crime and denial! It is all very natural,” said Ludwig, with a hoarse laugh of mockery; at the same time laying hold of the countess, as if to drag her to the palace.

“Off, unmannered and foul-spoken Ludwig!” exclaimed she, indignantly repelling him, and with a tone of more than usual spirit and command. “To my husband alone am I answerable, nor shall any hand but his dare to hold me captive.”

“His hand, I hope, will deal thee prompt and exemplary punishment,” said the ferocious Ludwig.

“Ah, Ludwig! ’tis a fiend-like inspiration that tells thee to long for my destruction, now more than ever.”

“I know not what you mean, Countess Guda,” retorted Ludwig, a keen air of curiosity tempering his former violence.

“Thou shalt know it!” said Guda with an increasing animation of tone.

At this moment Hugo von Roth entered the bower, with a confused and hurried look. “Well, hast thou seized on him?” asked Ludwig.

“He has escaped,” replied the minion.

“Sacred thunder!” (a very good popular oath in Germany and France to the present day) exclaimed Count Ludwig—“But you saw his face?”

“How could I, count, while his back was to me as he ran?”

"True! but did you not succeed in stopping him?"

"No," said Hugo, without hesitation; yet he nevertheless told a huge lie in one little word. For he *had* succeeded in stopping the fugitive, and he knew him well. Why then did he not seize on him? Or *did* he seize him? might *be* here demanded, by any reader as curious as Count Ludwig. The answer is, he did seize him; but on discovering who it was he had seized, he let go his hold, as quickly as though he had caught hot iron—yet his hand was not seared, for it was not the devil he caught so firmly and released so soon.

The Count Palatine was exceeding wroth when he heard of the events relative to his wife's detection, and listened to his brother Ludwig's details of what they both called the *proofs* of her infidelity—the one from self-interest, the other from jealousy, two motives which more than any other blind men to the truth, and, even when they see it, induce them to smother it. While the brothers devised together the fitting and safest punishment to inflict on the hapless, and as she maintained herself, the innocent Guda, every means were set on foot to discover her paramour. It was not long before a young knight was seized in an attempt to gain admission to the part of the palace where she was confined. He was instantly recognised as having been seen prowling about the precincts of the pleasure grounds on the evening of the fatal discovery; and was moreover notoriously heard to boast of his passion for the countess, in whose praise many verses, bad or indifferent, were found on his person. Nothing more was required. The young knight was hanged on a tree adjoining the garden. With almost his last words he proclaimed the innocence of the countess.

"That will be satisfactory to the count," observed the officer who presided at the execution.

"Will it?" said the young knight. "Then to complete his comfort, tell him that had she been guilty I should have sworn *just the same*."

"The words of a man of honour!" exclaimed the officer.

"And the sentiment of a pious Christian!" observed the priest. In the mean time the poor young knight hung by the neck till he was dead. His body was then cut down and thrown into the Rhine, amidst loud acclamations in honour of the Count Palatine's keen sense of justice. Hugo Von Roth never opened his mouth on the subject.

Count Ludwig, to make assurance surer than ever, and hurried on by his hatred of the countess, strenuously urged his brother, the palatine, to chop off his wife's head, as the best way he thought of cutting off all obstacles to his own inheritance. But the wily Von Roth soon made him understand that this would be the worst possible blow that could be struck against his interests; that another marriage might produce an heir to the palatine; and that the surest measure for Count Ludwig's succession was to have Guda safely incarcerated in some stronghold, until the course of nature removed the present incumbent from the possession of the place for which Count Ludwig panted. He acted quickly on these suggestions, revoking all his former arguments for Guda's death, by representing to the palatine the odium it might bring to him, and at the same time suggesting that perpetual imprisonment would be a severer punishment to one, whose whole value for life was gone when that of her lover was ended.

Count Hermann willingly gave in to these last reasonings, for there was something within him which whispered strong objections to putting to death the wife of his bosom. He was not one of those monsters of history, so dead to every touch of feeling as to doom to the block the head which had lain upon his shoulder, in the early charms of virgin confidence. He was, indeed, on recollections of such by-gone scenes, greatly tempted to believe her innocent and spare her altogether. But the equivocal speech of the dying knight threw him back upon his doubts and his jealousy, and a false sense of his honour, artfully acted on by Ludwig, made him fancy that his wife should have been, like Cæsar's, exempt from even suspicion — the haughty notion of imperious vanity, which thus looked for what is unattainable in a world of envy and malice. It was therefore decreed that Guda should be imprisoned for life, and the prison fixed on was the Pfalz.

When the countess was duly made acquainted with this decision she displayed, to the astonishment alike of those who hated and those who loved her, an almost unbounded joy. Her faithful women, who wept their separation from her, gazed in silent wonder. Count Ludwig vainly strove to solve so strange a mystery; and if Hugo Von Roth possessed, or fancied he possessed, a clew to it, he kept his secret close. Guda was finally committed to the Pfalz in the custody of

Von Roth, who, on Ludwig's special recommendation, was named governor of the important place. As the prisoner embarked in the boat that was to convey her from Stahleck, she returned the tearful farewell of her former attendants with smiles ; and when she landed on the little margin of rocky earth which surrounded the prison, she threw herself on her knees, and exclaimed, with looks and accents of uncommon fervour,—"Praise be to Heaven, and to holy St. Simon, the patron of the palatinate, for their special guardianship of the rights of its noble house !"

"A very disinterested thanksgiving in truth," remarked Count Ludwig, who had accompanied the countess to see her safely lodged in jail,—“very disinterested!—For it implies her own condemnation, as having borne attaint to the honour of my noble brother.”

"Oh ! continue," added the countess, not hearing this commentary, "continue to watch over the due succession of its princely line, even though I be the sacrifice through which it is accomplished !"

"A generous prayer, by the rood ! that I may reap its full benefit !" observed Ludwig, laughing, as the countess rose up and stepped across the narrow drawbridge, at the other side of which she was received by Von Roth's wife. Von Roth himself seemed completely puzzled for the gist of Guda's invocation. But whatever the meaning, he had no doubt of being quickly able to discover it ; and he had a lively hope in also finding the means of turning it to his own advantage.

The actual privations of imprisonment produced no more depressing effect on the good spirits of Guda than their anticipations had done. Loss of exercise, of honourable attendance, of rich living, of society, of influence, seemed unfelt or disregarded. Some internal source of consolation was evidently supporting her under every trial. But she was not of those reserved beings who long bury their thoughts in their mind's recesses. Unhappiness, indeed, could have been concealed by her, because she had none of the selfishness that calls for relief while bearing the burthens of the heart ; but joy seemed naturally to overflow her bosom, as though she felt the want of sharing it with others. The kindness and cordiality of Frau Von Roth would have pointed her out as the very subject for confidence, in a situation where

there was room for selection. In the dreary solitude of the Pfalz there could be no choice; but the countess felt no necessity for such, her heart being completely won from the first day by this her only female fellow-prisoner, (beyond the mere menials,) for all who once entered the lone place, with the exception of the governor, were doomed to inhabit its narrow precincts for life.

"You wonder, my good dame," said Guda, one evening, as she stood with her prison friend on the little terrace that hung out over the river, and they gazed together at the reflection of the rich landscape in its bosom,— "you wonder at the cheerfulness, the happiness let me more correctly call it, which animates me, under circumstances so apparently adverse?"

"Indeed, madam, it does move my special wonder."

"Is not innocence, good dame, sufficient to bear one up, under all accumulated woes?"

"Alas! no, fair countess; at least not enough to give your air of triumph, although it may be, for the passive endurance of wrong."

"Well, then, kind and friendly matron, know my secret cause of rejoicing—it is that I know myself possessed of the infallible means of giving at once conviction of my innocence, and at the same time rapture on his own account, to my too severe and too much deluded husband,—rapture which I shall share, which I do now anticipate in truth, for the very thought of the moment in which I shall become a mother makes me almost wild with joy!"

"A mother!"

"Ay, dame, a delighted mother! The mother, please the holy saints! of an heir to the princely house of the Palatinate, of a bright boy, fit to carry on the honours of his illustrious line, to be at once the justification of his mother and his father's boast and glory! Ah, worthy Frau, dost thou now wonder at my secret enjoyment? Dost thou not rather marvel at the self-restraint with which I have withheld news that would have at once relaxed my husband's rigid severity, and established me in all my right of place and reputation? But I resolved to let Providence work out the destiny of my child; and by willingly holding back my own vindication, prove how I despised all personal suffering, for the joy of surprising my noble lord and princely master with the consummation of his three years' anxious hopes."

During this rapidly uttered speech Frau Von Roth stood motionless, her hands clasped as they were at the utterance of her own last recorded exclamation, her eyes fixed on the countess, and gradually filling with tears. At length, when a pause in Guda's rhapsody allowed her to speak, she exclaimed, at the same instant a flood of sympathy bathing her cheeks:—"Oh! wonderful power of artless innocence, how you can delude the mortal bosoms which are at once blest and tortured by your presence! Oh, hapless countess! Oh, unfortunate princess! Oh, miserable mother! that seest not the seal of ruin thus stamped upon thine own fate and that of thy unborn babe! Oh, Countess Guda, recall thy fatal words—say not, believe not, hope not that thou art to give birth to a new victim of misery,—Heaven surely is satisfied with one!"

During the utterance of these words the countess could not comprehend their meaning; and when the speaker concluded this unbidden burst of sympathy, she seemed overwhelmed by the tone, rather than afflicted by the tenor, of the sounds which still rung in her ears.

"Ah, virtuous and innocent countess!" resumed the dame, "you understand me not, neither do you see the extent of your own misery—for what misery is equal to the sudden ruin of long cherished hope!"

"My misery! Nay, mock me not, good dame. I am sure, quite sure, that the virgin queen of heaven has listened to my prayers, and that I shall become the mother of a male heir to my princely husband's titles and succession!"

"The fulfilment of your prayer, noble lady, will be the completion of your woe and the destruction of your hopes."

Guda, confounded by the seeming inconsistency of these words, implored the kind-hearted woman to explain them. The latter did so in terms too explicit for misconception. She plainly showed the deluded countess that the promised birth of a child, which a few months before would have been hailed by Count Hermann with delight, and have proved a link of recovered affection and confidence between them, would be now but a certain source of increased hatred, from the palatine's already received impression of her infidelity. The countess long combatted this opinion, with a sort of buoyant gaiety, arising from an irresistible feeling of its absurdity, and from that self-deceiving obstinacy in which consciousness of

right is of all feelings that most likely to confirm its possessor. At last the truth of dame Von Roth's reasoning burst suddenly on her like a flash of light. Not from any peculiar brightness in her arguments at any one given stage, but rather from the sudden and self-impelled dispersion of those inward mists of wilfulness in error, which a straightforward honesty of character more than any other engenders. Such is the common process in all cases of unwilling conviction. Such is the true source of obstinacy, an evil consequence, arising from an amiable cause. But when the certainty of such long-cherished errors does break on the mind — when the inveterate belief in friendship is proved to be unfounded, or the reliance on affection, which has clung to us like a part of our nature, is wrenched away, how may the shock be depicted? How indeed is it possible that it may be endured, when the props and stays of the heart seem suddenly to forsake it, and it falls prostrate, debased and half-broken at the very feet of what had been so long its support and sustenance? Yet it recovers its elasticity, at least most commonly, for few are totally shattered. A self righting principle is almost always found to exist in the virtuous mind; an inward spring which bends but snaps not—and the bosom, lightened of the load of its mistaken confidence, breathes more steadily and freely than if it had never been so overcharged. A fund of solid wisdom has replaced the freight of flimsy sentiment. Vapour has been dispersed by light.

These reflections arise from the analogy rather than the identity between such cases and that of the prisoner of the Pfalz. Countess Guda had not to mourn the treachery of a lover or friend. She had only to endure the anguish of false hopes. It was only herself by whom she had been deceived. Yet the suffering was not less poignant; nor the re-action less sure. She at first nearly sunk under the shock, and she subsequently recovered by the spontaneous outspring of the recompensing instinct. She mourned her ruined reputation, her husband estranged, her station lost; but all seemed worthless, or a thousand fold repaid in the possession of her child, a treasure beyond all price.

But before this best reward for all she had endured and lost, was clasped in living evidence to her breast, several weary and anxious months were of necessity passed. It would be a painful task to trace the long course of agitation run by the

expectant mother's thoughts during this interval. Little stretch of fancy is required to picture the varied conflicts of fear with hope—for bright particles of hope still sparkled through her mind, like fragments of a broken mirror in which she felt it had been once reflected. The main points to be attended to, during these months of expectancy and risk, were perfect secrecy as to the situation of the prisoner, and the securing, if possible, the co-operation, if not the sympathy, of her gaoler in the various plans imagined between her and his compassionate wife, who had now become her intimate and confidential friend.

Frau Von Roth timidly, but anxiously, undertook this delicate task. She had but little hope of success, from long experience of the harsh and selfish disposition of the man with whom she was mated, but not matched; for never were beings so dissimilar by nature, and never had long habits of life or a common interest, which often bring opinions and feelings to a level, so totally failed in producing such an effect. The task was however undertaken; and great indeed was the Frau's surprise and joy, when, instead of a coarse repulse, she found her timid hints as to Guda's situation, seized on by her husband with the prompt avidity of a crafty mind, and with evidences of delight, which coldness prevented him from frequently feeling, and cunning still more rarely allowed him to betray. His wife was convinced there was now no pretence in the appearances which so surprised her. Her astonishment was redoubled, when on her proceeding to express her hope that means might be found to convince the palatine that the forthcoming child was really his, Von Roth burst into a fit of incredulous laughter. Losing all patience, she exclaimed, in a tone of bitter reproach:—"Husband, husband! thou art too bad; the king of hell could not doubt the innocence of this ill-treated countess."

"But the Emperor of Germany might, good wife."

"I know not the meaning of thy sinister words and ironical looks—I only hope, Hugo, and I trust in Heaven and St. Simon that a fine boy may be born in this place, in due form of legal custom, to inherit the rights and honours of the princely race of Stahleck."

"His best chance of that, good wife, is that he may never know his father," was the mysterious reply, which left the worthy woman more bewildered than before.

Hugo Von Roth was a man of few words, but he was as prompt in action as quick of apprehension. Fully comprehending, therefore, the importance of the intelligence he had just received, he lost not a moment in hastening to communicate it in the quarter where he calculated it would excite most interest.

"Oh, husband, as you value your salvation, do not betray this noble lady — do not drag down perdition on your soul by laying her at the mercy of Count Ludwig!" exclaimed Frau Von Roth, with wild energy, and in dreadful alarm, as Hugo told her he was obliged to leave the Pfalz for a few days, in the care of his underlings and the military guard.

"It would not require *days* to go to Stahleck, wife, if my course was bent thitherwards," replied he, with his usual smile of mockery.

"Whither go you, then? and why this haste?"

"Should an expectant father be left without the glad tidings of the promised blessing?"

"For the mercy of Heaven, Hugo, do not tell him yet! Wait till the child is born — it may not after all be a boy — but at any rate it would be premature to inform the Count Palatine" —

"The Count Palatine!" re-echoed Hugo, with another of his devilish smiles, and the provoking chuckle, his habitual expression of satirical disbelief. He said no more, but soon crossed the drawbridge and left the castle.

In due course of suffering the unfortunate Countess Guda paid her share of those millions of painful instalments by which woman liquidates the penalty inflicted for the imprudence of our first mother. A child was born to her — and, that child a son! At sight of this longed-for blessing, all was forgotten that might have qualified the mother's joy. *That* was without bounds, and Dame Von Roth thought it was without reason. For let the best come of the affair, let even her husband keep the secret, what was to be looked for, thought she, but a hazardous concealment of the birth for awhile, and a final abandonment of the infant? To keep it long undiscovered in the Pfalz was impossible. Of this latter point the Countess herself was convinced. But she strove to drive away the thought that sooner or later her child must be lost to her. She even at times indulged in the belief

that the hard heart of her gaoler would relent before the spectacle of her grief at such a separation, and that he would permit her to elude the vigilance of her guard and escape altogether, to seek shelter in the chances of the wide world, her babe for her protection, her innocence for her passport. But a notion like this had never entered the head of Von Roth.

It was the depth of winter when Countess Guda's son was born. The severity of the season made it impossible for either mother or child to enjoy any of the advantages of the open air, for even the humid and misty vapour of the river was an enjoyment to those confined in the close chambers of a prison. The consequence was that poor Guda and her baby both began to languish. In the mother it was want of her usual exercise ; in the child it was the natural instinct which urges all nature's products out into the breath of heaven, and in its default bids them pine and die. The sensitive parent quickly saw the danger of her boy. She had already discovered that it was impossible to move the stern selfishness of Von Roth so far as to allow of her escape. There was but one alternative—a separation from her child ; and she, who a few weeks before had shrunk in agony from the very thought, now urgently implored the cruel man to complete the deed. It seemed next to despair, entrusting her heart's treasure to his keeping. But could she see it pine and expire before her from the pure selfishness of fear ? The decision was made — the resolution was promptly fulfilled — Von Roth acted on her own suggestion ; and he removed the babe from the half-distracted, half-senseless grasp with which it was clasped to its mother's breast, in spite of all the force of reason, and of affection even, striving to loosen the hold.

The only request urged by Guda — she was in no situation to make conditions — was that her boy might be conveyed to her own native place of Gutenfels, close by, and there brought up in the family of some one of the faithful serfs, until the day should come when his birth might be avowed and his rights proclaimed ; for to that bright day she looked forward with all the enthusiasm of a mother's love founded on conscious right. In the hope of Von Roth accomplishing this project, she was at length consoled. She pictured to herself the daily pleasure of looking up to her former happy residence, the rock-based inheritance of her ancestors, of knowing that

her infant was close to the shelter of its recollections, for in the fanaticism of feudality she imagined protection and safety in the very name of her fathers and the memory of their power. And soon, thought she, the now helpless infant will grow into boyhood, robust, healthy, vigorous, and I shall see him at morning dawn, in burning noon, or by the dim shades of evening, following the wild career of mountain sports, springing with agile steps from crag to crag, or at times looking down with instinctive sympathy on this lonely tower, but unconscious that his mother gazes on him the while, through tears which fall in silent tribute on the river's bosom !

The soothing and consolatory train of thought ran on to wild and wayward lengths ; and the morning dawned on a night of mingled wretchedness and comfort, to be comprehended only by those grown children of nature who have lain in misery's cradle, rocked by fancy, and hushed by the false lullaby of hope. As soon as the sun rose upon the hills, and even before the mists rose up in homage from their vine-clad sides, Guda insisted on Frau Von Roth's leading her out on the little platform, that she might look up towards Gutenfels, and feast her eyes in the imagined view of her babe. This gentle illusion served to make her suspense less intolerable, until the promised hour for Hugo's return, with tidings that the child was safe and well. The promised hour came, but not the messenger. It passed over, and no tidings were learned of him. Days, weeks, months, years, long and dreary, dragged on their slow course ; but Hugo Von Roth, or the boy he carried from the Pfalz on that dark winter night, were unseen within its lonely walls.

One only intimation reached Countess Guda, to assuage the grief that at times almost turned to madness. A few mornings after Von Roth's disappearance, she discovered on the platform, where at earliest dawn she mechanically wandered out to gaze towards the hill, not quite hopeless of intelligence, a scroll of parchment, on which were inscribed the following words : " The mother's treasure is in safe keeping — and when the white and yellow banner waves again on Gutenfels, her heart may throb with joy — for then will right be done to her who suffers, and to him who is unknown."

These were mysterious and vague words — but they were enough for despair to cling to and charge its character. They

were the food which nourished Countess Guda for seventeen long years of imprisonment — the light that fed her lamp of life — the spring that kept the frail machine of reason from stopping altogether or turning into the riot of insanity. White and yellow were the colours of her own old paternal house. Such was the banner that for ages had floated on the towers and battlements ; till on her marriage with Count Hermann, it was superseded by that of the palatinate, which now waved over Gutenfels in emblazoned pride, adding a new pang of mortification to her whose aching eyes had no point of comfort to repose on. And daily did she watch for seventeen successive years, in the vain hope of seeing the long-loved colours floating once more in the breeze, and shining in the bright ray. Much less time than this would have sufficed to have carried death to a heart predisposed by nature for despair. But Guda's was cast in a different mould. Elastic and buoyant, it floated on the dark waters of worldly woe, and though at times it seemed to be engulfed and lost, it was sure to rise again with each successive wave under which it had appeared to sink. She had a moral energy that would not die. And while that lasts, physical extinction, except from accidental causes, may be looked for in a remote perspective.

During this long period the Countess's great comforter was Frau Von Roth. *She* could not be said to have mourned her widowhood. The loss of such a husband as hers was not a matter of much affliction, for she had no child to form a tie which even the most ill-assorted find it hard to sever. The strict laws of the palatinate made her a prisoner for life ; and as she had voluntarily submitted to the conditions (when her husband was appointed governor), in the sole hope of serving the noble prisoner committed to her peculiar charge, she fulfilled her destiny without a murmur, cheered by the duties of her sacred mission. These amiable women were mutual supports ; and the impatient anxieties of the one found unceasing relief from the quiet endurance of the other.

On the disappearance of Von Roth a new governor had been appointed, also a creature of Count Ludwig, who rigidly fulfilled his duty of guarding his prisoners well, but added no unnecessary infliction to the all-sufficient loss of liberty. He had again been replaced, and various others had successively filled the important post. Of all those none had offered an

exception to the ordinary rules of life. Some survived, some died ; but Von Roth alone had disappeared, leaving no trace to be followed by suspicion. Every one thought, but few ventured to say, that Count Ludwig must be at the bottom of the mystery. The wife of the missing man, conscious of the cause which had existed to make the suspected count smother the secret, even with the death-groans of her husband and the child he bore away, had at times no doubt that the prevalent opinion was the just one. But then she would start at recollecting the anomalous fact that *her own* life had never been attempted, nor that of the countess. Had Count Ludwig known her husband to be acquainted with the concealed birth, he must also have been aware of her complicity. Would he then have destroyed the one and spared the other ? Reason seemed to answer, no, to this question ; and then conjecture became only the more bewildered, in proportion to the frequency of its unaccomplished efforts at decision. Countess Guda partook but in a small degree, if at all, of her companion's intense curiosity. She never puzzled herself for a solution of the doubtful question. A happy credulity on the object of her anxiety convinced her that her boy was safe. She never wasted a feeling, nor afforded a thought on the subject of Von Roth's personal fate, or the probability of Count Ludwig's treachery. She breathed an atmosphere of highly rarefied conviction, in which doubt or misgiving could not live.

At length the crisis came which sooner or later is sure to terminate alike the mental or bodily ills to which humanity is a prey. Count Hermann died in advanced age, and without ever having given token of remorse, or offered reparation for the harsh sentence passed on his wife, on grounds so insufficient, and on suspicions so unfounded. He had for years tacitly resigned himself and his dominions into the complete governance of his brother, who thus enjoyed, long before he looked for order of succession, all the sweets of sovereignty except that one, which from its immaterial nature is perhaps that which man's inconsistency values the most. We mean the *name*, the unsubstantial title by which power is designated. When the ambitious Ludwig obtained that, having himself proclaimed Count Palatine with all the solemnity of supposed right, and the pomp of confident security, he seemed to have

reached the height of his mortal longings ; and it was from this height, with nothing of individual philosophy or external sympathy to soften his fall, that he was all at once plunged down.

Scarcely had the ceremony of his installation taken place when proclamations and addresses were profusely circulated, signed " Hermann of Stahleck, Count Palatine," in which the claimant announced himself as son of the late count and of his wife Guda, heiress of Cube, duly born in the castle of the Pfalzgrafenstein ; prepared with witnesses to attest his rights, and backed by an imperial army to enforce them. Some laughed at these pretensions ; others wondered at them ; Count Ludwig's heart sank within him.

" Hugo Von Roth has betrayed me ! " exclaimed he, on hearing the news. " He lives, and is the chief mover of this affair ! The foul fiend seize him, and the young impostor he puts forth ! Off, off, quickly a chosen band, — I myself will lead it, — to the Pfalz, to seize on the adulterous Guda and her confidant, Ursula Von Roth, and force from them a refutation of these audacious claims ! "

When Ludwig and his myrmidons arrived at the Pfalz he found the building unharmed and unoccupied. The fishermen at the river's bank informed him that a few hours before the little garrison was surprised, and the prisoner countess carried off with the other women, by a well-armed band of imperialists, headed by a man of a bold aspect, who seemed to know the prison and all its localities well — " Tell me not his name ! " vociferated the baffled usurper. " It was the villain, Von Roth himself ! "

" That I doubt, your highness," replied the old spokesman of the amphibious band, " for had it been he, his wife would have never gone with him so cordially, — besides it is well known to your highness — "

" Silence, old babbler ! — Toss that hoary villain into the waves ! " cried the tyrant. His orders were instantly obeyed ; and while the drowning man struggled and sank before his eyes, he continued in a transport of rage, — " I know that all the devils in hell are leagued against me in this world ! "

" And will lay fast hold of you in the next," murmured one of the listeners, who now all stole away lest some new victim might be seized on to appease the monster's fury. He.

and his followers quickly flew to arms. Courage was not wanting, as it rarely is, in defence of a bad cause. There is a desperate attraction in the daring of a bold usurper which never fails to draw congenial spirits towards his standard. If we see in our own days a brother and uncle, base as he is bigoted, find support in his infamy against innocence and right, we need not wonder at his prototype some centuries ago being backed by a servile herd, while priestcraft laboured to uphold his spurious claims. But in vain. The arm of the emperor was stretched forth to protect the just cause which the hand of the false palatine would have crushed. Ludwig made a desperate effort to retain his power ; but he and it fell both together, under the double influence of truth and force.

Countess Guda had been informed of the main event of these transactions in the way so mysteriously promised to her so many years before. One day while she and her faithful friend gazed as usual from their prison balcony on the river, and moralized on the unchanging flow eternally and regularly running on, like Time itself, a sudden movement, an instinctive sympathy, as Guda thought, caused her eyes to glance upwards towards Gutenfels, at the very moment that the crimson banner of the palatine was struck down by some invisible hand, and that of its ancient lords, the white and yellow combination so eagerly looked for by their persecuted descendant, elevated proudly in its place.

"Oh, Ursula ! my friend, my beloved friend !" cried she, almost frantic with the sudden sight, "look there ! look there ! He lives ! my dear boy lives, and has reached the promised term of honour and fame at last !—Now let *me* die—I have seen enough !"

"Oh, no ! no—till you have clasped your child in your arms, and enjoyed with him long years of happiness and liberty !—Yes, I catch at length the enthusiasm which has so long lighted you on, a beacon to the blissful hour that now approaches.—Yes, beloved lady, you were indeed a prophet, and now, in the completion of your foretelling, I feel the inspiration to which I was so long insensible."

"See, Ursula, see ! a black scutcheon is raised on the battlements ! I am at once a widow and a mother—My husband, God assail him ! is dead—and my son, as it were, new-born to me !"

The agitation arising from this surprise could not have been long endured by such a temperament as Guda's, had she been left to its busy workings in the close confinement of her prison. But a liberating hand was near. The fort was surprised as before related, and she and her confidant carried off by friendly force, with the captive garrison, to grace their triumphal route. All they could learn from the commander of the military party which effected their deliverance was, that it was his duty to conduct them direct to the chief seat of the imperial power, a camp not far distant, whence an overwhelming force was about to pour down on the palatine for the usurper's overthrow.

"And my son?" exclaimed the anxious countess, maternal love uppermost in her mind.

"Patience, madam! Wait awhile, and he will be in your arms," replied the officer.

"And the emperor?" cried she, gratitude next rising on the surges of feeling which were heaving within her breast.

"In good time, madam, both son and deliverer will be revealed to you," said a youthful warrior who stood close to the commander, gazing with full eyes upon the countess.

"Let the will of Heaven be done! But it is harder to wait one day for the consummation of a certain blessing than years after years for the coming of an unaccomplished hope! Lead on! lead on!"

The imperial camp was soon reached; and when the little party arrived no pomp of martial or princely pride was spared to do them honour. Trumpets flourished, banners waved, and lance and sword were brandished in all the ceremonious forms of salutation which rank could merit or loyalty devise. In the midst of all the glare and brilliancy of the scene, which dazzled more than delighted Guda's long unaccustomed eyes, she only sought one object.

"My son, my son?" asked she once more, in wild searching impatience.

"He is in your arms," answered the senior of her constant guides—and at the instant the fine young man who had with the other so closely attended on her steps, flung himself into the embrace which opened instinctively to receive him.

"And now, oh, now, where is our benefactor—the god-like, the glorious monarch who has wrought this blessing—this miracle?"

"At your feet, madam," replied the former speaker, kneeling before her, with all the submissive gallantry of chivalry's heroes, — "at your feet, too proud in thus paying homage to her whom his indiscretion doomed to years of suffering, but for whom Heaven has reserved the atonement of this hour."

Guda looked bewildered round — she saw that of all the gallant assembly of chiefs and fighting-men, no head was covered save that of the princely-looking man who prostrated himself before her.

"Long live the emperor!" was shouted all around. He, the despotic master of the assembled throng, now rose up, taking off his plumed helm, for the first time since he had completed his vow (which his protégé, the young Count Herman, shared,) to effect in person the deliverance of the captive countess; she started back, astonished and half alarmed, while a rush of crimson covered her cheeks, her brow and bosom, telling that the life-blood still moved stirringly in the *woman's* as well as in the *mother's* heart.

"Do you then recognize me?" asked the emperor, "and can you pardon, after such a tedious term of woe, the imprudent, the too daring cause of all?"

Guda's only answer was an eloquent burst of tears, while she attempted to sink on her knee before her imperial deliverer — her former suitor — the origin and the termination of her sufferings!" He caught her gently in his arms, and again spoke: — "Yes, madam, you now behold the daring man who broke on your wedded privacy, poured forth his audacious passion, and hurried on the crisis of that cruel fate, which a harsh husband and a base brother were too prompt and too unpitying not to seize on. It was I, indeed, who entered your bower at Stahleck — it was for my boldness that an innocent knight was hanged, and an angel of virtue, such as you are and were, degraded, imprisoned, and branded with the imputation of the guilt you shuddered at and shrunk from. And oh! how deeply did I pay the penalty of my presumptuous attempt in the remorse which for seventeen years gnawed at my heart! How often was I on the point of rescuing you by force, and proclaiming your innocence to the world! But the certainty of slander's overpowering force, even when opposed to an emperor's will — the dread of

fixing the imputation which I so ardently longed to remove, held me back from day to day, from year to year. I had also ever a high confidence in heaven, that right would be one day justified and innocence avenged. And I felt that to a mind like yours, imprisonment, with all its privations, were as nought compared to the glare of worldly calumny which had been certain to assail you, had I openly interfered in your behalf ere the real hour of justification came round. But I did all that man or monarch might safely do. I secured by sure means possession of your son. I knew that in getting him into my own hands I snatched him from the chance, the certainty almost, of destruction — and I have reared him here, in my own court, by my own person, and in my own principles, to become what you see him — and what he will be ere long acknowledged by the world, Hermann Count Palatine !”

The surrounding throng, who had intently listened as the emperor spoke, now caught the echo of his closing words, and loud shouts were sent up from thousands of voices, of “Long live Hermann of Stahleck ! Long live the Count Palatine !”

When Countess Guda in some measure recovered from the confused swell of excitement on which her mind yet seemed tossed, like some vessel on the rolling waves that succeed the tempest’s fury, she inquired of her imperial protector “how he had acquired the knowledge of her son’s birth ? how secured him from the custody of Von Roth ?”

“Let Von Roth himself answer those questions,” replied the emperor, pointing to a man grown grey and furrowed with time, yet whose cunning expression of countenance proved its identity with the still remembered features and sinister look of her former jailor. He bent on one knee before the countess, while his wife seemed to shrink and half turned aside, as though this apparition was not as pleasant as it was unlooked for ; and he briefly explained those points which still required elucidation. He told how he had instantly recognized the emperor, on that memorable evening, in the garden of Stahleck ; how he had sworn at the moment of his discovery not to reveal the secret ; how he had nevertheless firmly believed in the success of the emperor in his suit with Guda, and attributed to its indulgence all those

symptoms of happiness which caused the courtiers to marvel, and confirmed them in their belief of the dishonouring charges made against her, whose virtuous delight at the prospect of becoming a mother was attributed to wanton enjoyments. Von Roth then went on to declare that when his wife confided to him the true situation of the countess, he instantly repaired to convey the news to the emperor, having no doubt that he was the father of the child. To him therefore he finally brought the infant, of whose existence he had never hinted to Count Ludwig, certain that he served a more powerful and more generous master than that fierce tyrant. But if he appreciated the emperor's character, the estimate was reciprocally correct; for the latter resolved to keep his trusty informant in close custody, out of the possibility of betraying the important secret, until the day might come when his testimony would be essential for establishing the truth.

That day was now come; and, with proofs so undoubted of the birth and identity of the noble youth, his recovery of his rights was a promptly-obtained measure of justice. The usurper Ludwig fought out his quarrel to the last, nor yielded his hold of his unjustly grasped possessions till death in a decisive battle terminated his career. No sooner was the young count installed in all the honours of the palatinate, than the emperor formally proposed himself as a husband to the once beautiful and still most interesting woman, whose early charms had captivated his young and romantic mind. But Buda firmly resisted this dazzling temptation to enter on all the enjoyments and the inquietudes of greatness.

"No," said she, with firm composure, but with a heart overflowing with gratitude, "no, I am not fit to grace the dignity which you so magnanimously offer to share with me. Long unused to the world's ways, and never suited to the intricate paths of elevated state, I must now only request permission to retire for ever from the broad scene of life. Happy, exquisitely happy, in the recovered bliss of my child's existence and in the sight of his glory, I ask no more. No passion with which the name of love is associated has ever entered my heart, but that maternal affection which was my support under all privations, and is my absorbing sentiment even at a moment, and under the impression of an offer

like this. Let me then retire, — and to my own old retreat of the Pfalz, now made dear to me, as the narrow circle where I passed my long noviciate, for plenary indulgence of joy. I only ask that the odious name of prison be removed from what shall henceforward be my river palace; and that the absurd regulation be from this day annulled, that calls for even the temporary inhabiting in dreary solitude, by the wives of the counts palatine, of a place which can to me alone wear a charm, or bring a thought of enjoyment."

It is needless to say that these wishes were fulfilled. Guda and her faithful Ursula retired together to their now free residence: and it was in a long course of time, that their bones were laid side by side in the vaults of the little chapel where they so often and so fervently prayed together.

COUNTESS KUNIGUND.

COUNTESS KUNIGUND of the Kynast, so was her rock-built castle called, was at twenty years of age one of the wealthiest heiresses and most miserable maidens of the Rhine country. It was not hopeless love that caused her wretchedness, nor that made her devote herself to perpetual seclusion, and vow that she never would change her mourning suit for a bridal dress. Filial piety, wailing over the untimely fate of a beloved parent, had forced the ardent mind of the countess into an unnatural war with those feelings which rise spontaneously in the youthful heart, and bring it consolation for the sufferings caused by accidents, which are independent of its own movement. That which reduced Countess Kunigund to her present misery was a frightful one, and enough to produce some violent burst of sentiment, though it could not excuse the obstinate perseverance, which produced in the sequel consequences more terrible than itself. It is less therefore as an object of pity than as an example of pride that we are about to hold her up.

Wandering one evening on the edge of the tremendous precipice on which the castle was built, with her father, an old and infirm man, to whom she was dotingly attached, some momentary forgetfulness of his insecurity caused her to leave him for a while unsupported. He tottered on the outmost verge — fell over — and was dashed to pieces at the bottom of the gloomy glen, from which the rocky battlement uprose. The first shock and succeeding agony of the daughter were horrible. A thousand frantic reproaches broke from her, — she called herself murderess, parricide, monster, — and she swore in the crisis of her despair that a life of penance, mourning, and celibacy, should be the expiation of what her over-excited feelings forced her to consider a crime. She, in consequence of this rash vow, shut herself up in her castle, excluding all

visitors from its late hospitable halls ; and it soon acquired a reputation for gloom as great as that it formerly enjoyed for festivity and pleasure. The maiden mourner of the Kynast became the subject of compassionate curiosity through the land ; and the romantic feelings of the age were all up and overflowing regarding her.

Many knights formed chivalric designs, and made vows in accordance with them, all bearing on the interesting heiress, her desolate state, and her rich inheritance. Enthusiasm, like all ardent passions, is propagated by example. A moral epidemic affects masses of mind as atmospheric causes act on matter. Groups of men become simultaneously brave or generous, cowardly or sordid, without being able to distinguish the commencement of the symptoms, which seem common to all, but which nevertheless are first developed in some single individual, and then fly electrically through the rest. It was thus that the solemn vow of the young Ritter Flammenberg, to obtain the hand of Kunigund, or perish in the attempt, inspired many others with similar sentiments to those which actuated him ; and a wide-spread display of championship in the cause of the orphaned, and, as it was quickly discovered, the injured countess. For it happened, that in proportion as this wild sympathy was excited towards her in those from whom she was remote and unknown, a base design was conceived by two of her nearest neighbours, one of them her close kinsman, to take advantage of her desolate and unprotected state, to despoil her of her possessions, and add ruin to wretchedness.

These disgraces to chivalry soon began to act on their design, by violating her territory, harassing her serfs, and preparing more decisive outrages against her castle and her very person. In this emergency, the vassals, who had been so long happy and prosperous in the protection of the old lord, the influence of whose good character was equivalent to bodily vigour or strength of mind, now loudly and openly proclaimed their discontent. In every feasible way they assailed their sovereign lady with remonstrance and petition ; but it was long in vain that they endeavoured to obtain an audience, or to arouse her from her apathy, to listen to their wise suggestions. The few attendants allowed to approach her secret place of mourning urged the general complaints, and implored her to grant

the prayers of her dependent people, who begged her with one voice to choose a mate and a protector, for her own sake as well as theirs. Irritated and harassed by this clamour, her proud mind was vexed rather than soothed by such proofs of her own importance ; and, nothing moved from her resolution, she at length, in an impulse of haughty grief, consented to admit the vassals to her presence, together with the knights who, avowing themselves her champions, had come to offer their services to her.

The preparation for this audience was made with much solemnity, and its announcement caused general rejoicing among the many whose various objects were interested in its results. The serfs looked to the accession of some brave and stalwart young knight to the rights and privileges of their ancient lords, able to repress the inroads of the bold marauders, to lay their grievances at the foot of the imperial throne, and perhaps to turn the tables of wrong upon the powerful chiefs who now daily visited them with all the evils of civil spoliation. The several young knights who were the objects of these anticipations, and who avowed themselves aspirants for the manifold honours they implied, were anxiously busied with the hopes of success, a few perhaps with the fears of failure, but all with proud and high resolve to prove themselves worthy of the prize they were about to contend for, either in amicable emulation or bloody rivalry, as circumstances might decide.

When the doors of the great hall were thrown open for the admission of these anxious expectants, all were startled at perceiving the gloomy solemnity of the scene. The windows were all closed, so as that the light of day was quite excluded, but sombre and partial beams from crystal lamps, covered with gauze, fell upon the walls, floor, and ceiling, which were all closely covered with black velvet. On an elevated seat at the upper end of this gloomy apartment, Countess Kunigund was placed, her pale and somewhat stern, though handsome, features, contrasting with her mourning dress, and her air of cold indifference ill suiting with the ardour of the throng which pressed forward to pay their homage. "And what would ye now, faithful but importunate vassals?" said she, in tones of solemn reproach — "what would ye from a lone and desolate maiden, unfit for worldly cares or bland solicitings? Why may I not be permitted to fulfil my sad destiny

in peace, and accomplish my irrevocable vows, unmolested and unknown, in the silence of sorrow and the secrecy of remorse."

"Gracious lady," replied an old man, who was deputed by his fellow vassals to be their spokesman, — "noble Countess, there are many reasons to justify our intrusion on this scene of painful and too long enduring penance. Grief for the dead weighs not against duty to the living, nor should forced and hasty vows nullify the sacred obligations between liege lady and vassal. You owe us protection, — and we are ruined for want of it. You owe to your own dignity and your own interest a strong effort to repel the false neighbours who ravage your possessions and trample on your rights. Every thing calls on you to rouse from this lethargy of overwhelming woe, to vindicate your outraged honour, and redress your people's wrongs."

"What would ye have me do?" asked Kunigund, not displeased at the tone of bold but affecting sincerity of the old man.

"We would humbly urge you, fair and noble maiden," resumed he, "to choose from among the gallant knights who throng this hall, with us your faithful vassals, one able to defend us and avenge you, against false Hans of Valshsteden and the perjured Ritter Stalkeisen."

Countess Kunigund, at these words, threw a long and curious glance on the ten or a dozen young scions of chivalry, who all stood forward, bent their knees, and confirmed the words of the old man, by offering themselves with one voice for her acceptance. No beam of joy played across her features or broke from her eyes, such as lights the face of beauty when it catches the electric flash, from looks that speak to a maiden's heart in tones which it acknowledges. Some of those youths she had known before, others were now seen for the first time. They were among the flowers of German nobility, but not one of them seemed formed for her. The one mysterious and indescribable token of sympathy which joins heart to heart existed not between Kunigund and any living man.

"Well, then!" exclaimed she, at length, with a painful effort and an air of chilling haughtiness, which it required all the fervour and extravagance of chivalric devotion to submit to, — "well, then, since claims like these are forced upon me,

since the interest of others is at stake, and my inclination and my happiness are set at nought — listen to me! Vassals mine, and ye noble knights who would do me honour in my own despite, I consent” —

Loud shouts from the impetuous serfs broke the sentence of the countess, and gave expression to their delight. But when she waved her hand for silence, and on obtaining a pause again addressed them, their animation was somewhat damped by her rigid look and unbending tone.

“I consent — but only on one condition; and as I am ready to yield up my liberty and sacrifice my happiness for your good, my vassals, it is fair, is it not, that I should do so only on my own terms?”

Words of reluctant assent were murmured from the throng, in answer to a proposition which could scarcely be disputed, but which nevertheless seemed coupled with some reservation that threatened disappointment to their hopes.

“And with what condition, may it please your gracious countess,” said the old leader of the vassals, “does it seem meet to your highness to clog, what we hoped was the free consent of youth and nature, springing forth to meet the wishes and relieve the wants of your faithful and suffering people?”

“Ye shall hear!” answered the countess, while a look of fearful resolve and fixed indignation made the timid thrill with awe, and prepared the whole assembly for some desperate announcement or some act of despair. Yet there were some bold and ardent spirits among the knights, who felt a still stronger and wilder attraction towards the being they had wrought themselves into love of, though every successive word and look of hers was revolting to the true sympathy that is awakened by female heroism when it is allied with womanly grace.

“Ye shall hear!” repeated Kunigund, rising from her seat; but her eyes were so fixed, her complexion so pallid, her features and expression so rigid, that she looked less like a living being than some sculptured type of mourning, moved by mechanism from a cenotaph. She walked with stately strides towards the door of the apartment, followed by her domestic attendants and the few maidens who waited on her person; while the knights aspirant bowed low as she passed,

and the serfs fell back all with a profound obeisance, and some not without a thrill which was less of reverence than of terror.

To the surprise of all the beholders, for not even her chosen confidants were able to solve the problem of her movements, she walked forth out of the hall, through the corridors and vaulted passages, to the great portal, thence across the courtyard, out from the ramparts. over the drawbridge, and stopped not till she reached the verge of that naturally battlemented precipice which was the utmost external bulwark of the place, and from which her father had fallen. Oftentimes during this progress the most hardy of the spectators shuddered from a dread they did not venture to speak, and all seemed to follow the main actress in the scene, as though destiny hurried her on, and withheld them from preventing a terrible catastrophe. But when she reached the term of this strange promenade, she stopped short, paused, looked down steadily for a few minutes on the fearful chasm below, then turned round towards the awe-stricken throng, and spoke, "Now shall ye hear my conditions of consent," said she; "ye, cruel vassals, who force me to forego my only consolation for the past — my solitude and my devotion; ye, enterprising youths, whose championship for her who needs not and wishes not its display, may perhaps be based on some less purely chivalric principle than abstract love of one who loves ye not — no matter! ye shall have your selfish wishes gratified, if one be but as brave as ye are all importunate. See here! — here from this narrow ledge of wall, this loose and broken edge of rock did my venerable father fall before my eyes, which closed not in insensibility till they saw him rebound and dash from crag to crag a mangled corpse. His body lies unburied still in the deep mysteries of that chasm which no mortal yet has fathomed. Well! ye all see that I bear to look down on that frightful depth without my brain being turned — my mind maddened! Can he who aspires to my hand be said to merit it unless he can do as much? But none among those gay knights have let an aged parent slip from their hold — none of those have the memory of that foul crime to curdle their blood and dizzy their eyes as they look down. What then must they do to place themselves at least on a level with me in point of danger, and prove they have nerves as strong

and heads as clear as the weak woman they seek to mate with? They must do *this*! They must each and all, who seek for the lordship of the Kynast and the hand of the wretched Kunigund, mount their good steeds in full caparison, and each armed *cap-à-pie*, — and then, with unflinching heart and steady hand, ride the whole length of this narrow ledge, where scarcely footing is seen for the closest stepping courser, and where many a crumbling fragment makes even that footing insecure. He who can do this with unblanched cheek and unshaken hand, he alone may call himself my equal, and such only will I accompany to the altar, as a vanquished — but not even then a willing bride! If any choose to obtain me by an ordeal like this, let him declare his intention, and fulfil it — till then I am a vestal — the lone priestess of despair!"

She moved again into the castle — but this time alone. No one followed her. No one spoke. Her words seemed to have struck all the listeners motionless and dumb. A creeping horror, at the dreadful terms of the conditions, and at the fierce decision with which her speech was uttered, ran through the crowd. "This can be no woman—'tis a fiend in female form!" was the muttered thought of the great majority of those she addressed. All notion of love towards Countess Kunigund — all wish of obtaining her died away at once in several of the breasts which glowed so intensely but a few minutes before. It was not however so with all. There were four exceptions. He who first recovered from his wonder, and with still more inflamed desire burned for the possession of the marvellous being he almost deified, was the bold Ritter Flamenberg. Scarcely had this impetuous young knight, the first in vowing himself to her cause, the most enthusiastic in sacrificing himself to her harshness, lost sight of her as she re-entered the castle, than he seized his horse's bridle from the hand of an attendant groom, and vaulting into the saddle, spurred on towards the battlement. The astonished crowd did not attempt to stop him till he got close to the very edge, and till his horse in obedience to his efforts actually raised his fore feet to place them on the perilous path. Then several of the bystanders ran towards him and loudly remonstrated against his making an attempt which must be followed, they thought, by certain destruction. But the knight would not be restrained.

"No," said he in a loud voice, "no! nothing shall keep me back — my passion for the divine Kunigund will overcome all obstacles — have no fears, my friends, I shall ride the course in safety! But were it possible that devotion like mine should fail, and that I might be dashed down this frightful steep, are not a thousand deaths well earned, in the honour of dying for her? On, my good steed! on! To glorious death or blissful triumph!"

The words were scarcely uttered, and the first steps of the courser taken on the narrow and broken edge, when his footing gave way, and man and horse in an instant fell! They were dashed to atoms on the rocks below. A cry of terror burst from the throng. It reached the recesses of Countess Kunigund's retreat. She started at the shock. She watched impatiently the returning of the attendant who rushed out to ascertain the cause. He soon came back, pale and agitated.

"Well?" asked the countess.

"Gracious lady, Ritter Flamenberg, attempting the ride, has been dashed to the bottom of the glen."

Kunigund started — with horror let it be hoped — but the first expression visible to the shocked attendants on her heretofore marbly countenance, was a smile and a look of satisfied pride.

The homely proverb says that "one fool makes many." The prompt and wide-spreading contagion of human weakness, developed how it may be, is certainly a humiliating fact. The days of chivalry present perhaps the most abounding instances of fanatic frenzy, from the wholesale display offered by the crusades down to the individual examples of Countess Kunigund's lovers. No sooner were Ritter Flamenberg and his steed decidedly ascertained to have been destroyed, than Walter of Zinstauf, who had also entered the lists of perilous courtship for the fair hand and cold heart of Countess Kunigund, mounted his war horse and pressed on towards the fatal battlement, confronting almost certain death, sooner than let hesitation to risk the desperate ordeal be attributed to fear. No opposition was offered. The spectators were stupified by the recent horrid spectacle, and they stood in mute apathy awaiting the next. Von Zinstauf rode on, but spoke not a word. Just as his horse, after some reluctance, rose on the narrow ledge and began his forward march, the knight waved

back his hand towards the castle towers, as if in reproachful farewell to the cruel mistress for whom he felt that he was immolating himself. Scarcely ten yards from the starting place the war steed stumbled, tripped, and fell forward — recovering itself quickly in the instinct of danger it rose up, reared high, and becoming unmanageable to all the efforts of the intrepid rider it finally fell over, first throwing him from his seat. His presence of mind saved him, for he flung himself at the right side of the parapet. He fell heavily on the pavement of the broad platform, but the horse went down to certain destruction. The anxious crowd rushed towards the prostrate knight, whom they found with a fractured limb and a bruised body, to mourn his failure and rejoice over his escape.

Murmurs rose among the crowd. They swore this suicidal butchery should not go on. Curses were even heard to mingle with their indignant expressions against her who had invented so frightful a method of torture and death. “Better,” cried the boldest of the serfs, “better the spoliation and the outrage of Valshsteden and Stalkcisen than service to a woman like this!”

These words and the result of Walter of Zinstauf’s attempt were duly and quickly imparted to Kunigund. She felt or affected great concern at this mad perseverance on the part of those who sought her hand. Urged then by a faithful follower to retract the terrible condition and choose a husband from among the suitors, she resolutely refused; but she gave strict orders to prevent by force the renewed attempt of any one to ride the fatal battlement, at least for that day.

We must not attempt to paint her feelings and reflections during the night. Yet the mingled triumphs of her vanity over the two rash men, one maimed, another killed in so worthless a cause, must have found a deadly contrast in the pangs of her remorse for the wanton sacrifice of life and limb to her criminal exertion of influence over the heated minds of men. But during this night many of even the most heated of those had cooled. The fatal results of the two attempts already made, changed several staunch supporters of the orphan into deadly enemies of the tyrant; and the hatred of cruelty neutralized all their pity for misfortune. Two knights only were found on the morrow to persevere in the resolution

of the preceding day. They were brothers ; by name Ferdinand and Rupert von Ladenburg, remarkable for personal beauty, high spirit, and mutual affection. They declared their resolution to attempt the terrific trial of skill—or rather to brave the risk of destruction, for expertness of hand or steadiness of head had little influence in the task. When morning broke they presented themselves at the castle gates anew, and demanded due witnesses to the exploit, if indeed the countess would not relent and choose an unexceptionable husband, rather than persist in dooming to almost certain death one or both. The names of the new candidates for almost inevitable martyrdom were duly announced to her. Her eyes sparkled with joy, which however she strove to repress.

“ *Two* of the Ladenburgs,” said she, — “ but there is a third, Albert, the eldest, and they say, for I have heard of these brothers, the handsomest, the bravest, the most accomplished of any — Is he not of the suitors now? ”

“ Madam, Ritter Albert of Ladenburg was married yesternight, in the church of Roerbach, to Anna Von Issenvelt, whose love he had wooed and won.”

“ And these, his adventurous brothers, would now enter the lists to add me and my domains as fair branches to their paternal tree? Never! never shall Kunigund of Kynast be the reward of mercenary man — at least unless he can work a miracle in his form, and he pass the ordeal I have named. Let those young knights think well on it, but if they *will* persist, why 'tis their own doing and not mine.”

“ Gracious lady,” said the old chamberlain, to whom these words were addressed, “ might it be not better still to *command* instead of warning those rash but noble youths? To prohibit altogether their mad attempts:—to retract your conditions? ”

“ And choose a mate for this lone and desolate heart? ” said Kunigund, interrupting the timid counsellor. “ That I will never do. Let these young men ponder well, tell them from me that I am grateful for the homage they avow, but pray them not to run this risk. One madman has already perished — another victim is sorely hurt — 'tis too much for my peace of mind, enough for the honour of chivalry. Say all this, good chamberlain, but say it gently, do not wound

the boiling honour of knighthood, which brooks no slur on its courage, no hindrance to its high resolves."

The chamberlain who went out on this equivocal embassy, and the other attendants who heard the words, were convinced that obedience to the imperfect dissuasion was far from the countess's wishes. The vain-glorious pride of her nature was raised to the utmost, and she made light of the lives of men, self-sacrificed at so dishonourable a shrine.

Ferdinand, the elder of the brothers, first tried the desperate race; for they both rejected the persuasion of the chamberlain, and persisted in their resolution, believing that had the countess relented, or was she displeased with their design, she would have taken more effectual means to have prevented it. The gallant youth met no better fate than Ritter Flamenberg — he and his horse fell from the appalling height to the very bottom of the precipice, and never breathed from the moment he touched the bottom.

Half maddened by his brother's fate, yet urged on by the greater frenzy of his own insane passion, or what he fancied to be such, Rupert prepared to brave the trial and attempt the task, which was now looked on as utterly impossible to be accomplished. The various members of the household and the scattered groups of serfs attracted by the rashness of these new adventurers, now began to grow callous to trials which at the first exhibition of the preceding day had so shocked them; while even those who did not share the danger or aspire to the reward, became by degrees inspired with the same kind of feelings as those which so wildly burned in the breast of the young knight.

He mounted his horse — he bade farewell to his squire and the other witnesses — he privately crossed himself — cast one look of horror and grief below on his brother's mangled corpse — another up to heaven — and with a speed that was frightful to the beholders, but which he believed to be his best chance for accomplishing the feat, he galloped his courser along the parapet wall. More than half of the distance was passed, the horse's feet, as if by miracle, dashed securely through the rugged impediments, the deed seemed done — when all at once down stumbled the frightened animal, in a moment more it disappeared, the knight was unseated, but to the joy of the breathless beholders he caught the parapet with both hands,

and while he struggled to reach the top, several rushed forward to seize him and lift him from the horrid situation in which he hung. They were too late—the crumbling stone he grasped gave way and he fell. The shocked spectators looked shuddering down, and saw the lifeless body stretched not far from that of the brother who had led the way.

These repeated tragedies were too much for endurance. Public opinion was no more restrained. A universal indignation broke out; and Countess Kunigund was forced to proclaim publicly a prohibition against any new attempt, to which she added a declaration of her resolution, happen what might, never to quit her now-loathed and guilt-stained castle for another home. For it was said that at length her callous feelings had been touched, and that the deaths of so many martyrs had, after the burst of her unfeminine pride subsided, haunted her, as well they might, like so many murders committed by her own hand. Wild stories went abroad of her secret sufferings, of noises heard, of sights seen; the castle was, one by one, abandoned by all who could find a refuge elsewhere, the domains were ravaged by lawless plunderers, the serfs ruined; and she, the obstinate and mysterious author of the general misery, left alone and unpitied in the desolation she had created. Few friends sought—no lover assailed her—pity and affection passed by without deigning to seek her dreary abode. Six months thus passed away. The grass was growing high in the once populous court-yards, the gates creaked gloomily on their rusty hinges, seldom set in motion for the admission of visitor or guest, and the few domestics who remained, in close attendance on their shunned and solitary mistress, rarely left the internal parts of the castle, or ventured out, into the light of inquiry which strove to penetrate its secrets.

One night—it was in winter—when the rain was pattering on the roofs, and beating against the casements, a high wind whistling through the angular intricacies of tower and bastion, and every dreary accessory giving additional gloom to the sombre aspect of the Kynast, the warder was roused by the unusual sound of the bugle at the gate. On answering the summons to lower the drawbridge and give free admittance to the castle, he descended; and perceived a cavalier armed at all points, mounted on a tall, yet light-built courser, which like the armour, mantle, and plume of the rider, was jet black.

The warder regularly summoned the stranger to announce his name, quality, and business.

"Good warder," replied he, throwing open his cloak and exposing the red cross on his breast, "my name must rest in my own keeping to-night. My business is love — I come as a suitor to the fair lady of the Kynast."

"Welcome, welcome, Sir Knight! much does it glad my eyes to see at length a suitor of your martial mien and prowess at our gates — for no doubt that red cross was borne in bloody field 'gainst Paynim foes, and that its wearer is a warrior of fame! Come in, Sir Knight! you bear your passport, and your right to secrecy, in that revered and honoured badge."

With these words the overjoyed warder lowered the drawbridge, raised the portcullis, and admitted the stranger knight. But as the red light of the torch gleamed upwards on the stranger's face, the warder felt a sudden thrill of awe; for in the stern beauty of the countenance he thought he recognised that of one of the unfortunate young knights who had last fallen victims to Countess Kunigund's harsh ordeal — but *which* of them his feeble memory, rendered still weaker by alarm and superstition, could not decide. "Jesu Maria, guard me!" exclaimed he, as the horseman moved slowly onward towards the court-yard; "that may scarcely be a living man — for methinks the body and bones of the spirit that rides away so stately there, lie mouldering and blanched at the bottom of the devil's glen!" for so was the dismal place familiarly, and not unaptly, named.

A solitary varlet now came out to lead the knight to the body of the building, and one groom appeared to take charge of his beautiful Arabian steed. "What!" said the knight, in a tone of surprise and displeasure, but the servants could scarcely distinguish whether it was real or in mockery; "what! is this the scurvy attendance prepared by the lady of the Kynast for her guests? It was not so — if report speak truly — that she was wont to receive her suitors. Is the proud spirit of Countess Kunigund grown so humble?" And with the concluding words the varlets thought they observed an expression of bitter anger on the strange knight's dark and determined countenance. Altogether his air and manner made them shudder with fear; and the whispered suspicions of the warder found a ready reception in their belief that they were

doing service on no mortal being, but on the spectral effigy of one of the immolated aspirants who had last made the fatal effort for the performance of the impracticable feat. No doubt was entertained among the terrified menials of its being the ghost of one of the brothers of Ladenburg — *which* of them they could not determine, they had both been so much alike, and their fatal appearance was of such short duration.

Great had been the delight of these few remaining servitors at the rare appearance of what they at first believed to be a solid suitor for their mistress's hand, and infinite their readiness to give him attendance and do him honour ; but nothing in comparison with their terror on discovering it to be a ghost, and with their alacrity to obey its orders and anticipate its wishes. In those days of easy faith, flesh and blood were held in much less respect than spirit. Prompt then as thought itself was the speed with which the mysterious visitant was ushered into the grand reception hall, and an announcement of the new arrival made to Countess Kunigund. She, forlorn, desolate, harassed with importunities from without, and haunted by remorse from within, had long felt disposed to receive graciously any new comer who might present himself. The pride of her heart had been humbled, her obstinacy bent, if not quite broken ; and she had daily and nightly longed for the announcement which now broke so unexpectedly on her. The frightened domestics did not dare to tell her it was a ghost who claimed the honour of an immediate interview with her ; but they respectfully urged her instant presence in the great hall, to judge with her own eyes of the right of her impatient visitor to have his claims admitted, and hear from his own lips (they shuddered while they gave his message) the terms on which his suit was to be pleaded.

Countess Kunigund was superior to the fears of her followers, and, for the reasons just told, she was still more anxious than they to give a prompt audience and a favourable ear to the expectant stranger. Night, too, was now her natural hour of action. She had grown used to darkness. Day-light was a pain and a reproach. She was therefore as ready as she was willing to descend from her secret sanctuary to the great hall of reception, where the stranger awaited a reply to his solicitation for an immediate audience.

When Kunigund entered he was standing in a deep reverie,

and when his eye caught her dark-robed form and pallid face he started, but stirred not, as though the thrill that shook his frame had rooted it more firmly to its place. When *her* looks rested on his manly figure and fine countenance, she too felt a throb of no common kind. It was not superstitious dread, for her casual view of the knights who paid their homage on the memorable day of audience had left no impressions of their likeness on her mind. She did not therefore share her domestics' belief that one of the victims' shades had now returned on earth, in mortal guise, to do her harm and revenge his own sacrifice. Her emotions arose from combined and incongruous feelings, all tending however to one point. The noble mien, the manly beauty, the dignified severity of his piercing glance, at once subdued the soul of the now sensitive countess. She was his captive ere he spoke; but when he did give utterance to the honied words of flattery, when his brow unbent and his eyes lighted up, and his cheek grew flushed, and eloquence urged his soft-toned voice into strains of passionate love, the conquest was complete.

Morning dawned ere Countess Kunigund separated from her fascinating guest. We may not tell what various devices on his part so charmed away the night — how many moving tales he told of battles fought in Holy Land, of maidens rescued from danger, of tyrants punished for crime — not the soothing flatteries which stole from his beguiling tongue, tipped with the bland hypocrisy of seeming passion. Three days and nights he played his game of conquest, and won it well. Never was maiden more enamoured — never was proud beauty so enchained. This may seem rapid work to the cold casuists who argue on the theory of love, and *calculate* what mocks all measure and spurns all rules. It may seem indecorous to the prudish reasoners who settle down the time in which the heart may be lost and won. But love in the warm days — and nights — of chivalry was not what it is now — though even now, thank Heaven! there are youths and maids whose bosoms bound at the *first* looks and tones, which instinct tells them are the true ones. But Countess Kunigund was out of the pale of all common-place causes and effects. Prepared for the prompt reception of the passion which, like him who inspired it, knocked at her heart's gate for entrance in the cold-dark night of misery, she gave herself up at once to the longed-for delight — to the frightful *delusion*.

And be it remembered that the domestics, male and female, one and all, (and none other saw the stranger-knight,) were agreed that it was an embodied fiend in human shape that, with such fierce fondness, pressed his suit and gained the affections of their hapless lady.

On the third night of this short but ardent courtship, Countess Kunigund consented to become the bride of the stranger, having so far taken his honour and his truth on trust as to agree to the concealment of his name and quality until the moment of the celebration of the nuptials. She had given herself thus away with her whole soul. There was no reserve in the abandonment with which she threw her heart into the flood of passion by which it was carried along. Her delight was unconcealed as it was boundless. She seemed to have only then discovered her real character; and, instead of haughty harshness, her every word and look seemed inspired by the pure essence of feminine softness.

The next morning after the formal consent was given, the loud ringing of bells, hoisting of flags, and other symbols of rejoicing announced the approaching celebration of the so long-wished-for event. The serfs came pouring in, having been for a day or to previous prepared for the good news. The Kynast and its vassal dependants were once more the centre of joy and hope. Gloom and sadness seemed, by some magic power, banished from the place again, and all looked brighter than ever — for no light shines so brilliantly as the unreal gleams of hope.

The domestics, believing their mistress to be hurried on by a fatal destiny, partook not in the general joy — but they kept their secret opinion close, and none of the crowding vassals, who now filled the courts and halls, doubted but that the promised husband of their lady liege was a substantial being of living flesh and blood.

The hour of noon arrived, and the bridal party came forth from their attiring rooms in all the pride and brilliancy of ornament and elation. The countess outshone all the attendant maidens, who, summoned from the neighbourhood round, had hurried to grace the pageant, forgetting all previous qualms on the score of Kunigund's unpopular perversity, in the delights of a wedding, a rare, and, in the present instance, an unhopèd-for, occurrence. The chosen partner into whose

arms she was so-readily prepared to throw herself, came forth from his chamber to join the gay-dressed groups, among which his mistress shone so splendidly in robes of virgin-white begemmed with costly ornaments, and starting into glorious beauty from her many months of mourning and despair, like the morning sun bursting from the gloom and heaviness of night. Many a longing eye was turned on the door through which the stranger bridegroom was to enter; many a conjecture hazarded as to the appearance he would make. It was known that he travelled in no state, and that his undignified saddle-bag could hold no glittering store of attire. But none doubted that his good taste and gallant feeling had provided one suit of gay apparel, befitting the happy issue of his courtship, besides that plain black suit in which alone he had as yet appeared. The door at length opened, and he entered the thronged hall. A gloomy thunder cloud, descending in a bright summer's day upon some sun-lit vale, could not strike more dismay into the frightened flocks and herds, than did the stranger's presence, as he now stalked in, habited in his complete harness of black armour, with helm on head crowned with funeral plumes, no smile of nuptial happiness lighting his pale face, nor any movement of enamoured ardour animating his slow and solemn step.

But if the general effect of this painful surprise was disappointment and alarm, what was the prophetic agony that struck cold to the heart of Countess Kunigund? Who may tell, or even fancy, the pang that pierced through her triumphant exultation!

The dead silence which reigned through the almost stupefied assembly was broken by the stranger. "Fair countess, and ladies all who come to grace this spectacle," said he, in a tone of gallantry which rather reassured those he addressed, "ye deem, no doubt, that this is a suit unfit for a nuptial morning, savouring more of war than love. Be not alarmed! Full many a valorous knight has wedded the lady of his heart in harness — but I have yet a task to fulfil, a deed to do, ere I may doff my mailed coat and deck myself in bridal bravery."

"What task, what deed?" murmured Countess Kunigund, a fearful misgiving stealing on her mind. "Thou hast nought to accomplish now but to complete the ceremony which will make me thine, in form as I am in feeling, in legal right as in the heart's allegiance."

"What then, countess, do you forget the feat, without the performance of which you vowed so solemnly no living man should gain your hand?—In attempting which, so many noble knights have been already lost?"

The look and emphasis with which these words were uttered struck terror into all who heard them, but to none so much as Countess Kunigund. It seemed to her as though the embodied ghosts of her victims all frowned on her together from the dark commanding brow, and flashed angry lightning from the full eyes which were fixed on her with piercing lustre.

"My horse to the gate, oh!" exclaimed the stranger, in an imperious tone, turning round to the assembled men, and apparently careless as to the various qualities of those he addressed. The trembling domestics rushed out in a body to obey the order which none dared to dispute, and the stranger prepared to move away when Kunigund, losing even the memory of her former pride, sunk into the very abasement of love, and forgetting alike self-respect and self-will in the overflow of fear for the safety of him who had so vanquished and enthralled her, sprang forward from the place of honour where she had sat, caught the stranger in her arms, and sobbing aloud, implored him (like to an appealing criminal) to forego the risk he threatened, and join her in the instant performance of the rites which would make them one.

The smile which played on the stranger's lips at this display of humiliating affection, seemed to the beholders far more terrible than the frown which had preceded it. It fell on Kunigund's heart like the mockery of brightness or, of joy—like a moonbeam on a glacier. She felt petrified with a sense of cold horror which she could not dare to define. One only conviction of its nature was evident in every new pang she endured—the intolerable dread of losing him to whom she had given herself, body and soul. "And does he *reject* the gift? or will he risk its loss?" Such were the appalling questions self-rising in her mind, but which she had no time, even if she had the courage to answer. She still clung to the stranger with arms folded round his neck, and floods of tears streaming down on the chill iron which seemed to enclose a form and feeling as callous as it.

At length, worn out by nervous excitement, she began to feel the faintness which in woman so usually follows it. Her

hands gradually relaxed their hold, her arms sunk by her sides, a sickness stole across her heart, and had not one or two of her anxious and pitying friends caught her, she had fallen insensible to the floor. The stranger's voice revived her.

"Countess," said he, "these marks of your regard are too flattering, and above my poor deserts. But I must not yield to their blandishments—stern duty must be obeyed. It would be shameless cowardice to shrink from the ordeal in which several brave men have fallen a sacrifice. Could I hold up my head to claim your hand, covered with the ignominy of taking it without having earned it? Could you offer to your vassals as their lord, or oppose to your enemies as your avenger, one who shrunk, under the excuse of your womanly weakness, from the peril which suitors as worthy at least as he had braved and been destroyed by? No, no! Neither your honour nor mine admits a moment's hesitation. I must ride the perilous course in safety, ere I can hold myself fit to play my solemn part in this proud pageant. Hark! my good steed waits for me, and calls me to the place of honour,—Farewell!"

"Oh, cruel and mysterious man! what means this desperate resolution? I absolve you from the ordeal—I command, I implore you not to risk it—you drive me to frenzy!" were the incoherent exclamations of the now humbled Kunigund; but her relentless lover—if so he may still be called—broke from her grasp, rushed to the door, and bounded on the back of his impatient steed. The agitated throng followed him to the court yard, and the half-distracted countess mechanically hurried on with the rest.

In a few moments the knight was in his saddle, and in as many more the horse was on the platform's narrow edge. The throng who had irresistibly followed, stood gazing with fixed looks on the adventurous man—if man indeed they considered him, who now so wantonly braved a fate which the others were forced to. But, however some of those less initiated in the former horrors of the place might look on the present as a mere mortal adventurer, well were the domestics convinced, as they now marked him, that it was indeed nothing more than the wicked freak of some vindictive ghost, for they would one and all have sworn that the figure they saw before them was one of the young men who, six months

previously, had rode along and fallen from the same fatal spot.

The mysterious cavalier commenced his course; and all but the countess marked the air of dignified confidence with which he rode, and the perfect steadiness of the steed, who stepped over every impediment, with an unfaltering tread, as though human knowledge rather than brute instinct had been its guide. These were points for curiosity or common-place anxiety to admire. But the intense agitation of Kunigund saw all through a different medium. Her eyes, riveted on the form of him she loved, could descry nothing but the frightful danger of his position, unmixed with the least symptom of safety for him or for herself. More dead than alive, she waited the result of his undertaking; and she almost longed for the insensibility, even were it to be of the tomb, that would shut out the agonizing scene, which she could not however avoid staring on as long as it lasted. The suffering of the few minutes employed in the performance of the feat—for it *was* performed—was worse than an age of common pain. The legend does not tell whether Kunigund's hair turned grey during the trial; but it is certain that the very sources of life's fountain were fast drying up, and that only one finishing stroke was wanting to break the heart which was thus already parched and withered.

The feat was done. The rider had accomplished his task. Those of the spectators who believed him a mortal man, looked at him in wondering admiration. Those who thought they could see but the impalpable form of a fiend, gazed in terrified amaze. But shouts of congratulation burst from the crowd, and awoke Countess Kunigund from the trance of over-excitement which had assumed a shape so like the listless air of apathy. A new revulsion of feeling shook the principle of life within her to its very foundation, to its most intricate mysteries. She bounded forward with extravagant delight to catch in her arms him who seemed to have conquered her and destiny together. She rushed towards him as he rode proudly forward, his own calm and stern deportment not more contrasted with her wild abandonment of mien than it was with the foaming agitation of the war-horse, which seemed to feel (whether from instinct or reason, let metaphysicians decide) the whole force of the terrific triumph it had accomplished.

When the knight met the rapid advance of Kunigund, and as her outstretched arms were ready to clasp him, in the very moment of the bounding descent from his steed for which she awaited in throbbing anxiety, he drew himself up in his seat, and with the look and tone of an avenging angel, at once beautiful and brilliant, to fulfil his awful mission, he exclaimed — “Countess Kunigund, I have performed the frightful feat dictated to your former suitors by your pride, persevered in to their destruction by your cruelty, and at length abandoned from selfishness and base passion — not in my favour, but your own. Forgetting woman’s first charm, modesty, as you had before abandoned her fairest attribute, mercy, you have laid yourself at my feet, a stranger, and, for aught you know, an adventurer. You have disgraced yourself without honouring me. You offer yourself to me — I reject you ! I have proved my right to you and your possessions — I renounce the latter since they should come coupled with the former. Were you the world’s queen I would not wed you ! I swore to humble your pride and punish your cruelty, or die. Are you humbled ? Are you punished ? I think you are, and I am satisfied. For your sex’s sake I grieve — for your own I rejoice. Human nature is avenged ! And now, lest you should not quite understand me and my motives — lest those who hear me might still doubt either — know that I am already the possessor of a young and beautiful bride, a virtuous and amiable woman. Know more I am Albert of Ladenberg, the third brother of the two youths you so barbarously murdered, when one word of dissuasion for mercy’s sake, out of the many you have lavished on me from spurious and dishonouring passion, had saved them to their country, to the world, and to me ! I do not curse you ; but even now in your humiliation I hate as I have all along despised you !”

With these words the knight dashed spurs into his steed, and both seemed to fly like some winged animal forth of the place. Before the amazement caused by the scene had subsided, they were out of sight ; but ere the clatter of the courser’s hoofs died away, Countess Kunigund was a corpse. Her proud heart broke as the last words of the avenger fell on her ear.

To those who inquired, it was soon known that Sir Albert

had for months practised his favourite steed to accomplish by degrees every difficult passage of horsemanship, until he at length found him quite fit to undertake the most difficult of all. But the great mass of those who saw the feat, and heard the denunciations which brought death to the Countess Kuni-gund, persisted to the last in saying and believing the whole to have been a delusion and he a fiend.

Such is the common tradition to this day ; and every blast of wind that whispers through the ruins of the Kynast, or blows in the glen below, is converted by the shuddering peasants into the groans of the heart-broken lady, and the undying curses of those who died in her unworthy cause.

HEIDELBERG CASTLE,

AND ITS LEGENDS.

THE chances of travelling — for there was but little, if any, premeditated design — brought me one day to Heidelberg. I had heard of the place, as who has not? The beauty of its situation, its castle, its university, have been babbled of and buzzed about by all who, either singly or in swarms, have fluttered over the surface of German scenery and its institutions. But all that I had read or heard of this place had left very imperfect notions in my mind. Germany altogether, as well as in its details, had ever brought with it associations of confusion until I visited the country. Its many subdivisions, its perpetual changes of territorial limits, and the ever-shifting shades of its religious and literary opinions, seemed to defy all effort at classification. I never could come to any positive idea about any given place. The whole country appeared to me a huge tangled mass of contradictions, which it was absolutely necessary to see, before one could unravel it.

I dropt, then, upon Heidelberg as it were from the clouds. It was the first station that fixed my notions as to the country; and many agreeable facts have since connected it in my memory, by a chain of gilded links. I am not now about to separate all of those, or to give in detail the various recollections they unite. I leave to other writers to describe those rare combinations, composing scenery that needs fear no rivalry in its kind. Ridges of lofty hills, rich in forest clothing, looking down at either side on a fine stream; distant mountains, bathed as it would seem by the majestic Rhine; and all the varying objects of immediate interest which a painter could desire to unite, form a mass of beauty which might be easily trittered out into minute descriptions, that would after all save the reality untold. The scene is one which requires a

wholesale admiration ; and having given that to it, to an extent far beyond the common, I, at least, cannot undertake a bit-by-bit enumeration of units in such a total. But one object I have selected, because it is in itself a whole blending sublimely with the general aspect of the scene it dignifies, but in its appearance and its history a most unusual mixture of material with moral interest.

The Castle of Heidelberg, in its present aspect a stupendous ruin, was long a mansion of great magnificence. It was not the work of one sovereign nor of one age. Begun in the fourteenth century and finished in the seventeenth, it possesses an extraordinary variety of architectural character, and connects the widely contrasted styles of rugged feudality with those of civilized despotism. Nor is it merely in the variety of tastes which preside over its construction that it is peculiar. The capricious forms in which fate has visited it with destruction have not been less remarkable. Built in parts as the stronghold of mere mountain chiefs, in others as the decorated residences of royal princes, ruin has fallen upon all in most incongruous shapes. Here gapes a tower, with walls that seem to have been moulded by giant hands, riven by a fierce explosion, and wrenched from its rooted hold of centuries in the deep earth. There is a range of castellated walls and rich façades, seared and scorched by lightning and the flames that burst from its ignition. In other places are imperfect turrets mouldering in the rottenness of time, and again are seen deep marks of the desolation caused by battery and bombardment, with the dilapidations of modern Vandalism and mere mischief. There are plenty of " Itineraries " to give dates and authorities for every one of those details.

The ruins, viewed from the river's banks, or in any aspect below their site, give no idea of their effect when closely visited, or gazed on from the mountains above. The mixture of stern Gothic, with modern florid architecture, in which the latter predominates, is injurious to the whole as a monument of the picturesque. The flat front wall of what would seem to have been the main building, studded with windows and surmounted by pointed gables, rising above the roof, offends the savage dignity of the round towers by which it is flanked, and the rugged buttresses and irregular battlements, which support the whole mass of building, and seem hewn out of the granite

acclivity on which it stretches its broad length. Whenever this connecting screen of front wall crumbles from its present too perfect attitude, like a curtain falling from before the interior mass of ruin which it hides, the view will be infinitely improved in romantic effect. As it is, the first feeling it gives while looking up at it from the river's level, is one of comparison, all to its disadvantage, with many a less vast but more venerable ruin.

But when, from the mountain heights above it, the astonished eye takes in at once the whole and all its parts, grasps its prodigious extent, and separates its most minute details, then it appears in its true majesty. Then its vast quadrangle, massive walls, broad battlements, and profound fosses, are viewed in awe and admiration. Then the moral uses of decay come home to us. The expanding mind embraces broad intervals of time, and plunges deep in the secrets which seem buried in the mouldering mass beneath. Every turret and terrace seems alive with the mysteries of tradition. The courts and halls are peopled with beings of bygone days. Generation on generation sweep rapidly along. Refined magnificence, rude power, and savage strength furnish their rapid illustrations to each change which fancy pictures, in conjuring up past periods of splendour, chivalry, and barbarism. The dark ages and the bright are at once before us. The thirsty imagination drinks in the broad stream of history; or pierces for some hidden spring of romance, that bubbles on its flower-fringed banks.

But thus seen, all is a maze of admiration and ardour. We gaze and wonder, create and analyse, as if we worked on chaos. Masses of mental formation are before us; but no forms spring out in individual relief, no actual group is traced in the distinct lineaments of its time. No story woven into a compact similitude of any given epoch. Costume and character, events and scenes, are all commingled. Fact blends with fancy; and a vapoury haze enwraps and shadows the whole.

To reach any positive and connected train of thought, we must descend into the arena. We are by degrees convinced of this. We feel above the fitting level for inquiry. We look at the rugged path, and pick our steps by anticipation, down the tangled brushwood and shattered granite of the road. But we move not—the limbs acknowledge the lassitude of

the mind — overstrained imagination has unstrung the sinews — and we struggle long with the listless languor which chains us to the spot ; as we strive at times to break from the undefinable thralldom of sleep.

I had the good fortune to make my way, for the first time, into the ruins, by the most difficult and least agreeable of their approaches. It is the old and narrow street, on which one drops as it were from the steep hill behind ; the only carriage way, and that almost impracticable, leading from the buildings of the university. The houses which form this street, seen as you approach the town, or from the lower parts of it, are peculiarly picturesque ; their white walls, slated roofs, and smoking chimneys growing, it might be fancied, amidst the thick foliage of the hill side — a village in a wilderness. But the illusion vanishes, in no very pleasant shape and accompanied by no very fragrant odours, — unlike the pageants which we read of and believe, when childhood gives warrant for fairy land, — as we toil up the broken pavement, washed by a mountain stream, that cannot however cleanse the hovels at either side. Had I burthened myself with a guide, I had assuredly mounted by a smoother path, descended perhaps by some trim-cut way, into the beautiful pleasure grounds at the rear of the castle ; and so have missed the surprised delight with which I was almost overpowered, on abruptly entering the *avant cour*, passing under the portal, and standing on the bridge that connects this approach with the main quadrangle of the structure.

Overpowered may sound exaggerated. But it is in reality the word most applicable to my sensations. I never was so struck with any view of mere mortal power, or of the joint devastations of time and man, as when I cast my eyes to the right and left of that bridge and gazed on the stupendous evidences of strength and ruin.

On either hand is a deep valley or glen, formed of the old fosses of the place, with irregular mounds of earth and grass-covered rubbish, hurled down from the battlements which cannon and decay have shattered. Trees of full grown height have sprung from the prolific soil, which is watered by the mountain streams that gush through the outer walls, and trickle through their verdant tapestry of ivy and other creeping shrubs. Except some poplars, which outshoot the rest, the trees,

though apparently of a century's growth, do not reach near to the bridge from which they are viewed, and the effect of depth is thereby prodigiously increased. The height and bulk of the battlements is quite proportionate; and the massive extent of irregular buildings, seen all around, harmonizes with the rest. But when the eye is caught and riveted by one particular object near at hand, every accessory point of view is for the moment forgotten. I allude to the ruined round tower, called "the Blown-up Tower," which was split asunder and torn open from top to bottom, by an explosion of gunpowder during the attempted destruction of the castle in 1676. I could not measure the thickness of the walls nor the height of this tower — and if I have heard its dimensions, I forget them; but nothing I had ever seen had given me such a notion of material bulk. The architect who planned the erection was only surpassed by the engineer who presided at its ruin. Time never could have destroyed it single-handed. The half that remains in its original place is as solid and secure to-day as on that of its completion, and the moiety that was torn from it and cast down, reposes half erect in the earth into which it sunk, unimpaired and entire, as if it only waited the application of some giant lever to raise it to its original position, and reconstruct the huge building, which was dislocated, but could not be destroyed.

Many other individual objects deserve mention, — and have amply met with it, in profuse descriptions of this memorable place, most particularly in the work of M. de Graimberg, a French painter, who has for twenty-two years been a fixture in the only habitable apartment of the ruins, devoting a whole life of talent to the delineations of the abounding *chefs d'œuvre* of architecture and sculpture which he is thus snatching from oblivion. This fact speaks volumes as to the manifold treasures of the place for antiquary and artist. On those topics I do not mean to enlarge. My purposes take a different path. The first burst of admiration over — and many an after visit having tempered its intensity — I cast about, as usual, for some traits of moral action, illustrative of the place, and of those human feelings which touch our sympathies nearer than all the accumulated wonders of cement and stone. I found the place rich in traditions, romance, and history.

The three epochs to which this desultory preface has made

allusion all invited me. In the first, there was the thrilling legend of Welleda, or Jetta, the virgin magician of the valley of the Neckar, from whom the name of Jettenbuhl has been given to the hill on which the castle stands ; and whose wild prophecies and mysterious career were closed by a tragic death, in the glen called, from the circumstance of her fate, the Wolf's Brun.

Then there was the painful story of our English princess Elizabeth, daughter of James I., and wife of the Elector Frederick V., the unfortunate King of Bohemia.

The first of these subjects is almost too remote and apocryphal to stand alone, as a type of the place. The second too real, too much within the province of domestic history, and already, as I understand, transplanted into romance.*

But a third subject started up, among the prolific associations of chivalry which could not fail to have become naturalised in such a site. This last I chose for my illustration, although it was impossible to reject the fairy legend of the Wolf's Brun, and I forthwith proceed to tell both tales ; satisfied if I in some measure excite the interest of my readers for the scene on which they were acted.

* In "Count Frederick of Lunenburg," by Miss Porter, mentioned, with great praise, by the late Miss Benger in her life of Elizabeth.

THE

LEGEND OF THE WOLF'S BRUN.

Who will walk with me to the ruins of Heidelberg Castle, and hear a tale of the olden time? Who can find a charm in the story of a beautiful girl, who preferred love to power, and sacrificed herself to her feelings? Let such a one listen to the story of Welleda, and in all the extravagance of its fiction believe it true, while he lingers on the enchanted spot to which it has lent a fairy spell.

In the high north, where giant Nature smiles not, like a nursing mother, on her wild and wayward offspring; where the ocean lashes the bases of granite crags; and where forests of dusky fir trees bend and creak in the storm; there dwelt Ingald Ilroda, one of the most formidable of the Scandinavian kings. In his youth he had visited the south, and captivated the maiden fancy of the timid Alanda, who preferred this adventurous son of Odin to any stranger knight in her father's halls. His youthful and severe beauty awed and delighted her; and she consented to become the pride of the northern king, and to return with him to his frozen country. Alas! she knew not that it was peopled with a race of men torpid as the eternal winter against which they struggle — rude as the rock in the foaming surge — and furious as the billow that breaks over it. The transient and burning summer of such a clime scorches the senses without warming them; and the iron winter closes upon the year, as cold and cutting as hatred on unbridled passion. No genial spring is there, to dew the blossoms with tepid tears; no autumn to mature the ripening fruit.

And here the delicate Alanda was doomed to pine away the remainder of her days: but she was the mother of Welleda, and was not that joy enough? The fair child united in herself the sensibility of one parent and the energy of the other,

blended and tempered into the mild lustre of female excellence. Often have her light blue eyes, shaded by their glossy lashes, gazed upon the pale beautiful mother, as in consciousness of her sufferings; yet the tears of that mother appeared happiness to Welleda, in comparison with the coarse and boisterous pleasures of the women of the north.

Her father seldom noticed her. He was almost constantly engaged in warlike pursuits or long hunting excursions; and when at home, surrounded by boon companions in the banquet hall, quaffing from his golden drinking horns, until the natural sternness of his disposition grew into violence and fierceness. Then the innocent child fled away from the sound of riot and debauchery, to hide herself in the apartment of her trembling and sorrow-stricken mother.

On one of these occasions, the king, already inflamed with wine, sent his page to demand the presence of the queen in the banquet hall, that she might sing to him and his companions. The page bore away Alanda's harp, but the poor minstrel at first refused to follow, until the young Welleda, taking her hand in both hers, said fondly, "Come, dearest mother, I will go with you, and Ingald Ilroda will not be angry."

Alanda kissed her child's forehead; and excited by the hope of interesting her lord's feelings in favour of the sweet daughter of their early love, she gracefully entered the hall; and striking from her harp some wild and touching symphonies, she sang with chastened pride the following stanzas:—

What form is that which fades so fast?
Whose sighs are those that pierce the blast?
Some mourner weeps within yon towers,
And chides the slowly-passing hours,
Unpitied and alone.
Can this be she, erst seen to bloom—
Her valley's rose—now sunk in gloom,
And with'ring with each stroke of fate?
Ah! ye will mourn, when 'tis too late,
And she you weep is gone.

The royal oak once stoop'd to clasp
The simple wild flower; but the grasp
Of gnarled branch and rugged stem
Hath marr'd the Rose's diadem,
Its leaves are falling fast!
One tender blossom still remains,—
Ah, save it from its mother's pains!
And plant it gem-like in some shrine,
Where rose with rose may intertwine,
Safe shelter'd from the blast!

As the last words died away upon the music-breathing lips

of Alanda, the harp fell from her hands, and she sank into the outstretched arms of her husband, whose iron bosom had been subdued by the melody of her sweet voice. Little Welleda sobbed as if her heart would break, and clung round her father's knees, approaching him for the first time in her life without fear. Meanwhile, the rough chieftains rose from the table, in evident emotion, and formed a group around the royal pair. When Ingald Ilroda could speak, he exclaimed with tender vehemence, "Live, live, Alanda; and if any wish of yours respecting our child can be gratified, I swear by Odin it shall not be denied to you!"

Alanda, half fainting with the sudden joy of success, roused herself to exertion on hearing these words of encouragement. She pressed the hand of her husband to her heart, and implored him in moving accents to enable her to die in peace, and bless him in her last moments, by promising that when she was no more, Welleda should be conveyed to the family of her mother by faithful servants, and receive her marriage dowry as an inheritance.

"It shall be done," replied Ingald, looking at his child with a degree of affection altogether unusual with him; nay, he even drew Welleda towards him, and stroked her auburn locks as gently as he could. "It shall be done," repeated he, "I have sworn it. This child would ill endure the climate and country that have wasted her mother. Come hither, Wredmar," said he, to the most aged, and at the same time the most remarkable of his guests, — "Henceforward I confide Welleda to your care: you have heard what I have vowed to her mother, and you are not ignorant of my approaching enterprise. To-morrow I set out for the plains of Upsala: you shall remain here with Alanda and Welleda; and if any evil chance befall me, convey them immediately to the south." The grey-headed old man bowed assent to the commands of his king; who pressed his wife and child to his valiant bosom, and returned to table with his companions, leaving Wredmar to lead the queen and Welleda to their apartments.

Alanda was still sleeping, when the trampling of horses under the castle gate echoed through her apartment. The ominous sound awoke her, and she flew to the window to catch a last glimpse of her once-adored Ingald. She felt that she should never again behold his dreadfully beautiful countenance

— that they were for ever separated ; and she called on him to return, in piercing accents of misery, whilst burning tears coursed one another down her pallid cheeks. Ingald Ilroda could not hear her ; the cold and bitter morning blast carried away the parting words of Alanda. She clasped her hands, and returned to her bed, to throw herself upon it, and weep bitterly. Welleda had crept from an adjoining cabinet ; and seeing her mother lying apparently senseless, began to cry piteously and call upon her by name. The welcome and beloved voice of her child restored Alanda to herself ; and taking her in her arms, she ceased weeping, but sobbed, and was for some time silent.

The society of Wredmar was an unspeakable relief to Alanda, who had been so long without a friend. She treated him with unlimited confidence, and looked upon him as the faithful and accomplished guardian of Welleda. She knew that she was dying, for her constitution had long since given way to the pressure of stifled sorrow, and now the beautiful ruin was daily sinking into decay. Wredmar was skilled in the healing art, and did all he could to prolong Alanda's life ; but the consolation he imparted to her maternal heart, by promising to superintend the education of Welleda, and never to desert her, was the most effectual of all his remedies. With her child Alanda was cheerful. She described to her the varied beauties of nature in the land to which she was going, with all the enthusiasm of an exile. Then she would press Welleda to her bosom, and tell her of another world, and of another God besides Odin. But Wredmar always interrupted the conversation, in his turn, when Alanda ventured to touch on these topics.

Thus passed several weeks, when Wredmar received an exulting dispatch from Ingald, relating to him the accomplishment of a deed of horror, till then unequalled in the savage north. He had invited six noble kings to a feast of reconciliation, and in the security of hospitality and friendship, had treacherously murdered them all, and made himself master of their territories. The stern Wallkyries carried them in flaming arms to Vallhalla, to assuage the burning pain of death in groves of everlasting coolness. But the fire of vengeance continued burning on earth, and first of all fell upon Alanda's guiltless head, devouring her, as its purest victim. She became mad,—

she knew not her own child ; — “ Wolf’s brat, wolf’s brat,” she exclaimed, shuddering, “ thou wilt be devoured by one of thy race ! ” and then, softening into semi-recollection, she would exclaim — “ Poor child ! thou too must perish by misguided love ! ” These prophetic words were uttered too often not to make a deep impression on the young mind of the unfortunate Welleda. She had heard, too, the story of her father’s having been once conquered in angry combat by a playfellow of his youth, which inferiority caused him to weep bitterly ; when his foster-father, Swipdag the blind, caused the heart of a living wolf to be torn out and dressed for the youth, who devoured it, under the impression that he would in future overcome all his enemies.

Poor Welleda ! her broken-hearted mother died, and she lost her only friend ; for let it not be supposed that the wily magician Wredmar had any pretensions to that title. Great misfortunes mature a strong mind ; and Welleda’s ripened into reflection and power. But joy had fled away from her youthful heart — for her beloved mother was dead, and had not even blessed her ! Moreover, her prophetic and maniac words haunted her like a spell. She considered herself as destined to be unhappy, and began life with the morbid sensibility so unfavourable to youth.

Immediately after the burial of her lamented parent, she was hurried away by Wredmar to another of her father’s castles, situated at the source of the Maelar, in Sudermania ; for it appeared that Prince Iwar, son of one of the murdered kings, was mustering forces to surprise Ingald Ilroda. Ingald arrived unexpectedly one evening at the castle, and abruptly entered the room where Wredmar and Welleda were sitting. Welleda was busy at her loom ; and her father, disregarding her presence, required from Wredmar the exertion of those supernatural powers, of which Welleda had begun to entertain some suspicion. Wredmar replied to Ingald in a bold and somewhat scornful manner, which gave Welleda a painful impression of Wredmar’s superiority over the king, — “ Yes, it will be easy for me to command my spirits to roll up the huge rocks that lie scattered in the plain below, and form with them an impregnable rampart. But then you have offended Thor, by the violation of hospitality ; and the Nornes are taking the part of the assassinated kings, and I cannot reach *them*. How-

ever, if you wish me to protect you against Iwar's vengeance, you must give up Welleda to me, and I shall separate her destiny from yours, and rule it exclusively." Ingald Ilroda did not hesitate; he resigned his child; and when Welleda heard the conclusion of the unnatural compact, she felt that she was lost. She was carried to her couch, swooning and insensible. She wished to sleep — to forget the miserable future that was opening upon her. But her mother's form, uttering the dreadful prophecy, haunted her all night, and chased away the recollection of each sweet endearment. She saw, too, her father's colossal figure standing as it had done the previous night before the dying embers, leaning on his spear, and brooding fearful deeds; and last of all, the malignant triumph of Wredmar's haggard countenance, as it glanced towards her, completed her despair. From these sad visions she was roused by a heavy rolling sound, like distant thunder. She approached the narrow casement of her chamber, and saw with horror that Wredmar was fulfilling his part of the compact; for monstrous and misshapen crags, entire masses of granite, were bounding across the plain with immense velocity, and ascending the steep hill on which the castle stood, with equal ease. They had already formed part of a gigantic wall, upon which two war-chariots might drive abreast, and defy the enemy beneath. Yet there was no living thing to direct their motions! Welleda shrunk back, and saw, with increased dismay, the angry form of Wredmar standing near her. "Perverse child," exclaimed he, "has power no charms for you? Is your father's safety nothing, that you presume to condemn and hate his benefactor?" Welleda could not reply, her tongue refused to move: she blushed and remained silent. Wredmar then drew from his bosom and presented to her a beauteous purple flower, saying, "Here, child, I have brought you the flower you have long wished for, take it as a pledge of my forgiveness." Welleda was glad of any opportunity of pleasing her tutor, and gratefully received his gift. The fragrance of the flower was so delicious that she seemed willing to inhale all its perfume, when she suddenly fainted, and was immediately carried by the skilful Wredmar to the sea-shore. When she awoke from her trance, she beheld a purple tent stretched over her, in the inverted form of her favourite and mystic flower, the golden cords of which seemed to represent

its stamina. She cautiously raised the rich curtain, and for the first time in her life she saw the sea, bearing on its proud waves a magnificent vessel, on the prow of which was Wredmar. A boat was in readiness to bring him ashore; and he approached his lovely pupil with courtesy and even kindness, willing to let her feel that if he had power, she also had influence. On entering the boat, he perceived the purple flower which he had given Welleda the preceding day lying by her side. "Unthinking child!" exclaimed he, "how little you value my gifts. Be more careful of that precious flower; you know not how much depends upon it, — we may want it again." Welleda, abashed by the reproof, and unable to reply, took the flower and placed it in her bosom. At the same moment she felt herself lifted into the vessel, and in the next, saw herself receding from the land of her birth. She knew that she was entirely in the power of the mysterious Wredmar, — she was on the broad bosom of the immeasurable ocean without attendants — the green land became grey and indistinct — it was soon enveloped in mists. She stretched her delicate arms round the mast, as if she would arrest the flying speed of the vessel; she called upon Wredmar to give her back to her royal father — to restore her to the confidential servants of the household — to convey her to the castle on the banks of the Maelar. "Behold what you would desire," replied the malicious fiend, showing her a magic mirror, in which she saw the castle, with its dreadful rampart of rocks, surrounded by armed men, who were exulting in the terrific flames that rose from the centre of the pile. Welleda thought she heard the shrieks of torture and despair rushing upwards with the fierce element. Wredmar spoke, — "Thus perishes Ingald Ilroda: he is sacrificing himself and his followers to the goddesses of vengeance!"

Welleda's tears were instantly dried; but indignation burst from her coral lips, unchecked by the consciousness of her own helplessness. "Then you have deceived my royal father, perfidious sorcerer! and deprived him of his child, without ensuring his safety. Had you told him how limited was your power, he had bravely sallied forth to the battle field, and sold his life as dearly as he could!" Wredmar did not interrupt the torrent of Welleda's reproaches. When she had exhausted herself, he assumed increased dignity, and desired her to take

warning by her father's fate. He reminded her of that father's guilt; and finally almost persuaded her that his self-inflicted punishment was the noblest atonement he could make for it. Welleda remembered, too, the time when she had loved the old man with all the playful fondness of childhood. She had heard her mother speak of him with respect and regard, and from that moment she was awed into implicit obedience.

Many months passed away, and Welleda saw many countries; but found no place where she could wish to dwell. She shuddered at the recollection of the countries of the north, and the intoxicating pleasures of the south sickened her. She learned with rapture from her tutor all the mysteries of nature, and acquired powers of which she was herself unconscious, until accident and necessity made her acquainted with them. Wredmar, after various efforts, became enraged at her firm but calm resistance to his inducements to learn the darker portions of his magic arts. He tried all means to entice her into his snares, but in vain. The innate purity of the maiden's mind protected her effectually against his blandishments; and having no longer the power to deprive her of the influence secured by her possession of the enchanted flower, he parted from her, reminding her of her mother's words.

Welleda was now in the virgin bloom of youth. Her graceful figure was swelling into perfection. Her airy movements were like the dance of the floating zephyr. Her eyes were the faithful beacons of the glorious mind within; and the rest was as lovely as the blossom of early spring. When she traversed the blooming valleys of the south the summer birds sang to her, the flowers sent up their fragrance, and offered her the honey from their cells, the mists rolled away, and the divine rainbow itself seemed to encircle and protect her. Fairy land seemed to grow beneath her feet. She was at once the creature and the creator of enchantment. In one of her wanderings she chanced to reach the valley of the Neckar. She stood upon the heather-covered hills, and surveyed the lovely landscape glowing all around. She felt that this was the place destined for her — that she had made the discovery of a home — that her mother's spirit might even dwell in it, and contemplate her power and her happiness. Perhaps, too, she might discover in it a race of beings in harmony with such a display of nature's superiority; for, despite her

mother's prophecy and Wredmar's curse, she longed to find some one to whom her soul might unite its inmost sympathies.

In the highest state of enthusiasm, she called into existence, by her magic flower, a splendid little castle, crowned with costly turrets and spires, and surrounded by enchanting gardens; where marble basins, curious exotics, and graceful trees combined to form the luxury of retirement, and the delight of Welleda. Yes, reader, upon the very spot where the present noble ruin of Heidelberg Castle stands, there was Welleda's magic dwelling, which struck a pious awe into its village neighbourhood. The pious fisherman crossed himself as his little boat stood opposite the enchanted castle, and the rash huntsman who found himself unexpectedly near it, started back, as if pursued by his own hounds, and fled far away, not in terror, but from reverence. Welleda saw the influence of superiority over the ignorant; and perceived that she must assume some familiar form, to be able to approach the timid peasants, and administer relief to their necessities. She therefore amused her fancy and gratified her feelings by wandering about the mountains in the form of an old woman. The shepherds and old huntsmen called her Jetta, by which name she was generally known in the surrounding villages. They accepted her gifts, which were often herbs and ointments for the cure of various diseases; and many had the boldness to profit by her skill, though the villagers shook their heads and hoped they held no traffic with the powers of darkness.

A year had passed away, and Welleda sat by a marble fountain, surveying her own image in its limpid waters. "And hast thou found none to know and love thee, Welleda?" said she to herself. "Does not that open brow invite confidence? Does it impart none? Is there any malignancy in my tearful eyes? And oh, my heart! has that no human feeling?" As she uttered these complainings, a beautiful white bird — the last gift of Wredmar — perched upon her shoulder, and fluttering his silver wings, touched her lovely lips with his bill. Welleda returned his caresses, saying, — "Dost thou know my thoughts? — Assist me, then!" The bird immediately flew away; and Welleda retreated to a laboratory within her fairy halls, where it was her custom to pass many of her leisure hours.

It was a lovely summer's morning. Each little blade of

grass was trembling with its delicate dewy nourishment ; each flower seemed to sleep, unconscious of the rising sun ; the air was one delicious perfume ; the feathery beech-trees climbed the mountain height, and the crystal Neckar beneath reflected all this beauty on its surface. The youthful wanderer might lie down on the mossy bed of the woods, and dream a thousand dreams of love and ambition without being interrupted, or knowing how many tranquil hours had glided by. The young and handsome sportsman Ferrand was musing in the forest depths, reclining beneath a rock, from which a spring was bubbling forth its music. He had been pursuing a deer all the early part of the morning, and had chosen this sequestered spot in which to snatch a few hours of sleep. But Ferrand could not sleep. Ambition lifted him above his lowly birth. The roof of his father's cottage was too low for his aspirings ; and in this state of mind the wings of fancy carried him over the world and beyond it. As Ferrand's mind grew conscious of its superiority he often fell into vague musings like the present — the feverish pulse of undeveloped talent was beating — he panted for a wider sphere ; he felt himself confined within the limits of his native hills. As he lay beneath the rock and saw them rising in every direction, he thought they even weighed upon his brain ; and then — amongst all who dwelt upon the banks of the beautiful river — there was not one fellow-being to ease his swelling bosom of its undefined longings !

The grown-up playmates of his childhood had begun to complain of his unsocial disposition. They said he was proud, and at length went so far as to insinuate some dangerous cause of estrangement from their village sports. The jealous maidens whispered that he had often been seen in the immediate neighbourhood of the magic castle ; and one simple girl, who really loved him, confessed that she had had an interview with its mysterious inhabitant, on his account. She declared that, at the last full moon, she had approached the garden pavilion without venturing to raise her eyes from the ground, until the sound of silver bells and a soft fluttering in the air induced her to look up. She then saw above her head a beautiful white bird, which, gently touching her cheek with his wings, flew towards the pavilion window, which opened to receive him. In the next moment a lady stood there, dressed in glittering

white, and covered with a long silvery veil. The lady held the white bird on her taper finger, and spoke in sweet and encouraging accents ; but the poor maiden could not understand the words, her senses became instantly confused and she fainted.

The next morning she awoke and found herself in her own little cottage bed, and no one had remarked her absence. As soon as this marvellous story had travelled up and down the village, and was duly magnified by each wonder-loving gossip, a new interest was excited. The young men insisted upon the impossibility of a beautiful woman concealing herself from the admiring gaze of mortals. The maidens declared that no woman possessed of supernatural powers would deprive herself of personal charms ; whilst Heinricks, and other old huntsmen of the hills, assured their younger friends that they had frequently met the sorceress gathering herbs, and that she was nothing more than an old wrinkled infirm woman, whom no one need care to meet in the day time, or wish to see again.

The moody Ferrand was the last to hear of the maiden's adventure ; for no one wished to make him angry or increase his coldness. And then, though almost every other person knew it, it was always a secret. At length, however, Ferrand's favourite sister related it to him, as she sat spinning at her wheel. It was delightful ! Now he had something to suit his daring spirit — to exalt his imagination — to excite his feelings, and perhaps reward them. He resolved to penetrate as far as the interior of the enchantress's castle, be the consequences what they might. Nay, he wondered that he had not thought of this enterprise before. What a world it might open to him ! a world of mystery and power. He passed the night in fanciful dreams, and left his father's cot before daybreak. He continued his wanderings until he sank, overcome by sudden languor, beneath the rock. Suddenly his dog started up, and Ferrand's quick eye caught the mystic bird as it stooped within his reach. He seized his bow, the arrow sped from his rarely erring hand, the bird soared aloft with a piercing cry, and a few drops of blood fell upon Ferrand's arm. He had not forgotten the white bird in the peasant girl's story ; and he resolved to possess himself of his wounded prey. With his usual impetuosity he rushed forward, catching every now and then a glimpse of the bird, until he found himself upon the very verge of the enchanted

castle. He paused — he stopped to recover breath — perhaps resolution ! The carved gates flew open to receive him, and with all the madness of unripened enthusiasm he darted across the fairy threshold. Within was a glowing paradise of sweets. Balmy shrubs and exquisite flowers breathed forth their greetings, and the sparkling fountains laughed in the sunbeams. Ferrand gazing around him with a beating heart, acknowledged the taste and power of the wonderful creature who had brought all this luxury to embellish one little spot of earth ; but amidst the blooming thickets he sought for her in vain. At length, through a delicate vista of birch trees, he beheld this embodied spirit of excellence ! By a marble basin, that held her image trembling on its surface, sat Welleda ; the purple flower of Wredmar decked her bosom ; her waist was pressed by a silver zone ; and through clusters of ringlets shone a brilliant star on her alabaster forehead. The wounded bird was on her hand, and drops of gore trickled from its breast. Her feet were clad in purple sandals, and rested on the patient neck of a tamed leopard. Her white garments floated round her, like the mist of the valley when it seeks to hide the blushing earth from the fervent sun. Oh, Welleda ! — wert thou not beautiful ? Yes ! — more beautiful than the awakening blush of spring, the glow of summer, or the refulgence of autumn.

Ferrand lowered his eyes, to gaze upon the watery image ; for to meet the look of the original was too much. Love ! delightful love, requires but one moment in which to loose his unerring shaft. Welleda sat motionless — Ferrand stood entranced. Both saw for the first time, the one — the only one whom each could love.

Welleda uttered the faint but irresistible cry of helplessness, sinking back upon her pillow of flowers ; and Ferrand, inspired by this movement, rushed towards the basin, to throw himself at her feet, in a state very similar to her own. No malicious genius was there to note the advancing steps of Time, nothing was there to rouse recollection from its delicious intoxication. Welleda and Ferrand — knowing each other, as if known for years — yet fearing to dissolve the spell of silence and mutual admiration, gazed on in rapture and pride. Yes, pride ; they were proud of finding their imagination of perfection realised in each other. Let it be so, pride is no

bad instrument; let it go by what name it may. It will at least add strength and independence to any feeling, if it dare not present itself in its naked identity.

A sigh burst from the heart of Welleda, an ominous sigh — the breath of love — the acknowledgment of passion — the relief of sorrow — Welleda felt her danger, and dared it. It was in vain that the purple flower of Wredmar closed its leaves and drooped. Love's glorious ecstasy could hear no prophetic warning. Welleda had lived a century in one short minute, and knew all that had hitherto been concealed from her — all in fact that was worth knowing. She felt the glow of sympathy, and would have died rather than have lost that one bright hour of existence. Perhaps it was the happiest she ever knew. The rainbow is more beautiful than sunshine.

With the peculiar instinct of delicacy, Welleda diverted Ferrand's attention from herself — or rather seemed to do so, for it was almost necessary to speak. "You have wounded my bird, Ferrand," said Welleda, in a soft subdued tone. Ferrand started at the human and yet ethereal sound. With a sudden sob, an almost convulsive spasm, he answered — "Forgive me, beautiful Welleda — I knew not that it was yours."

Oh, how easy to forgive! or rather, how inadmissible is the word, where love sanctions and equalizes every thing! Welleda held out her lily hand, and Ferrand bathed it with tears and kisses. It was enough. How lovely are the wild-flowers of the spring — how simple yet fantastic their forms and combinations — and ah! how poetical their language! Just so the infant dawn of happy love!

When Ferrand entered his father's cottage that evening, he found its inhabitants in gloom and discontent. He scarcely knew how to account for this, as he involuntarily stooped at its entrance — until he recollected that he had been absent since day-break, and now returned, not only without game — but even without his bow and quiver. These last had been left on the edge of the marble basin.

"Do you stoop to enter your father's dwelling, Ferrand?" exclaimed one of his elder sisters, impatiently. "Your pride will certainly be your ruin; pray Heaven we may not share it!" added she with fervent selfishness.

Ferrand was annoyed, but would vouchsafe no answer. Amalia, his youngest and favourite sister, silently took his hand, and looked timidly yet inquiringly into his face, as if she felt herself responsible for some awful deed of rashness. This was more intelligible than the ill-natured scorn of Bertha. "Fear nothing, dear Amalia," whispered he, "but let me love you better than ever — for you have made me the happiest of mortals." Amalia sighed, shuddered, and hid her face in her hands.

At this moment the petulant old Heinrick entered the cottage. He had been searching the neighbouring forest for the beloved Ferrand, his only and, as he thought, erring son. "Well, Ferrand — here you are — God be praised ! and your old father has been looking for you high and low, at the close of a weary day ; and neither you nor I have any thing to give the good wife for supper ! How's this, my boy ? where have you been all day ?"

These were startling questions. The subterfuge of invention was too mean for Ferrand ; it would even have injured the lady of his love — for it would have lowered him. Love's votary feels himself identified with the object he adores. He maintains his idol in colossal dignity ; for to give it the proportions of common-place, is but to degrade himself. Ferrand therefore could neither utter an untruth, nor mention to vulgar ears the superior being whom he now worshipped. He preferred risking his father's displeasure and his sister's suspicions. He was silent.

Ferrand's confusion was great. His senses were bewildered. The meanness of the cottage, when compared with the refinements he had just left, was altogether stupifying and revolting. Was he the same man ? Was he Ferrand, the only son of old Heinrick the hunter ? He scarcely recognised himself — no wonder then that no one else should know him. One bold flight had carried him over the surface of common-place things, and he unconsciously looked down upon them. Who will blame him ? What a surface it is to toil — to spin — to eat — to drink — to sleep — in endless repetition ! But for such as Ferrand there is more than this. To feel — to hope — to dare — to love ! What an emphasis was now laid upon his being — he lived for another ! What an antidote to all the unworthy stirrings of human nature ! Happy Ferrand !

Did Ferrand wait for sunrise? or who was it that sprang from rock to rock, and ran along the velvet turf that bordered the magic castle in the grey dawn of morning? It was indeed Ferrand. He had forced himself to pass the night in his father's cottage, by way of resolutely doing something that was odious to himself, and thus satisfying his conscience for what was to come. The first streak of light therefore emancipated him — the task was over. Welleda had reclined upon her couch, in half-forgetfulness, but her mind was far from tranquil. And when she roused herself to salute the first beams of the sun, she found the purple flower of Wredmar — her precious talisman — transformed into a snake! and curling hatefully within the folds of her vest. She seized it, and endeavoured for some time in vain to shake it from her hand. At length the white bird perceived it, and as it fell to the ground caught it up in his beak and devoured it. Welleda watched in breathless expectation — the bird fell dead at her feet!

"I am lost — forsaken — alone!" she almost groaned. "Wredmar's revenge is all but complete — let it be so!" she added, after a pause of intense feeling; "I have gained more than I can lose." So saying, she fled from the grotto, and hurried through the garden to the place of meeting, and there was Ferrand ready to receive her.

It would indeed be dreadful if there were not something to reward the self-sacrificing spirit of woman! Welleda forgot the cloud that overshadowed her, in the bliss of loving and being loved. Each little word thrilled through her every nerve; each observation secured to itself an importance in her bosom; and thus the noiseless hours glided by, until the sun had risen to his meridian height. She then led her devoted Ferrand to a marble hall, in the centre of which was a table loaded with fruits, vases, and flowers, fit and only food for ærialized lovers — who shun the grosser nutriment of other mortals. If Welleda presented the delicious pine-apple to Ferrand — he ate it devoutly; and if he, in his turn, chose from the profusion one bunch of grapes more tempting than the rest — she received it as a token of affection. This exquisite repast finished, Welleda proposed to initiate Ferrand into the mysteries of her magic chemistry, and led him to her laboratory, a small apartment that looked towards the plains of the Rhine.

"It is here," said she, "that I used to pass the greater proportion of my leisure hours ; but now — knowledge itself will lose its charm unless you share it with me."

Ferrand, in whose untutored soul every thing that was good, or great, or beautiful, meant Welleda, readily consented to the study of all that had interested her. When, therefore, the sun-beams shed their golden light upon the Neckar, she conducted him to a cave in the heather mountain, which opened to a subterraneous passage leading to the river's banks, and even beneath the rocks of granite, over which it rushes so impetuously. As they entered the dark cavern, hand in hand, a projecting branch caught Ferrand's hunting-cap, but he did not think it worth while to return for it. The star on Welleda's forehead now shone forth in all the mild luxury of moonlight. It threw all surrounding objects into strong light and shade, softening all that was abrupt, and deepening all that was dark.

Ferrand felt her superiority for nearly the first time. Unhappy Welleda, you should not have exposed him to this ! Something pressed heavily upon his heart — he was silent — and apparently uninterested. Welleda had lost the power of penetrating into the minds of others by any superhuman quick sightedness. Her beauteous bird was dead. But the love of a tender and anxious woman is almost sufficient for itself. Welleda felt that her mysterious powers were irksome and displeasing to Ferrand ; and the generous being would at that moment have willingly sacrificed them at the heaven-lit altar of pure affection ; but her time was not yet come !

Soon an ocean of splendour burst upon the astonished Ferrand, and he gloried in the very attributes that he had envied or disapproved the moment before. His own enthusiasm was awakened — and enthusiasm is too wide-spreading to admit the existence of one narrow-minded idea.

The choice spirits of the various elements came forth to greet the lovely creature whom they seemed to acknowledge as their mistress, and torrents of light rushed down to overwhelm the dazzled senses of Ferrand.

But Welleda's presence and her gentle dignity supported him. She explained to him the properties and uses of all he saw. She gathered rays from the diamond, and dissolved the thin veils that hid one mystery from another. He listened

in rapture, and proved that an instinct of comprehension is natural to a lover's mind. One effort made — and all follows as a matter of course. Be content to know that you have been ignorant — and you will soon become wise. The sun will pierce the smallest crevice that opens to his light.

It was thus with Ferrand ; and by the time that he had wandered through all the rocky halls that lie buried beneath the Neckar, and smiled at the security which divided him from its impatient waters, his spirit soared above his humble birth, and drank in full draughts of the exhilarating spring of knowledge. He found increased force in his adoration of the lovely guide to it, and pitied the contraction of the mind that could not appreciate hers.

Was this all ? Did admiring love confine itself to the contemplation of talent ? Was it content to idolise ? Must it not appropriate ? Too fatal certainty — it must !

Poor little Amalia ! how bitterly did she repent having told Ferrand the peasant-girl's story. Few things are less exceptionable than sisterly love ; few things more amiable than brotherly sympathy. Amalia could not rest ; something told her the real meaning of Ferrand's words ; surely he had fallen into the snares of some powerful and malevolent being — and she — she was the cause of all this ! Unhappy girl ! She asked her mother's permission to gather sticks in the forest : the old woman freely gave it, for the stock was getting low. Amalia breathed more freely, and stepped forth on her errand in all the simple and delightful truth of sisterly attachment. What would she not dare for her beloved brother's sake ?

I cannot tell what induced her to walk in the direction of the Wizard's Cave, as it was called from time immemorial. Perhaps a presentiment. At any rate she could not have put her courage to more sterling proof ; for if the precincts of the enchanted castle were to be dreaded, those of the wizard's murky cave were to be shunned.

Amalia went on, checking her natural fears by some thought of her brother's possible danger, and an occasional hope of her influence over him. In a tumult of agitation she reached the awful spot. Was there a spell on its very entrance, or did Amalia's own exaggerated state of mind prepare her for the shock which followed, without the influence of any magical power ? She entered. In the deep hollow of the cave hung

the well-known hunting cap of Ferrand, supported by the feeble sprig that had originally disengaged it. This was the first object that caught her eye. She wanted no more to consummate the ruin of her gentle mind. This was proof enough, if the fears of poor, affectionate Amalia had needed any : Ferrand then had entered the fatal cave ! He was then utterly lost ! Hope died on the very threshold of the place. It was too much. Amalia turned away and rushed from the fatal scene. She never stopped until she reached her cottage door ; but ere she reached it, reason had abandoned her on her flight. Amalia was mad.

Let it be imagined, but not described ! — Ferrand — guilty, enamoured Ferrand, returned also to his father's cottage. His fevered lips — his haggard countenance — his scarcely steady gait, all spoke the effects of some too exquisite, or too terrible excitement. But how was he assailed ? Whose heart-piercing shrieks were those, calling upon him by name, and uttering the imprecations of madness against another name — too dear to him now ?

If we glance at the intoxicating pleasures that had so recently assailed Ferrand, and contrast them with the home reality that now struck him dumb, cold, and motionless, we may fairly allow on the first shock the superior influence of the present to the past, and forgive him if he were for a moment unjust to Welleda. Welleda was his — but his beloved sister was irretrievably mad ; and his own selfish happiness had driven her to this. Had he been betrayed ? Was he indeed the sport of the fiend that poor Amalia raved about ? — Ungrateful Ferrand !

His father, mother, and two elder sisters now assailed him. They accused him of being seduced by the lady of the castle — of having yielded himself a slave to the powers of darkness. Fearful words and fearful curses were uttered ; but they were absolutely nothing to the appalling cries of the dear sister whom he had ruined.

“ See there,” exclaimed old Heinrick, “ see what the hell-doomed boy wears upon his finger ! see the pledge of his union with a fiend — a witch — a damned spirit ! Oh, boy, boy ! Ferrand, Ferrand ! is it for this that I have cherished you ? Is it for this that I have been so proud of you ? God punishes my pride, and my grey hairs will go to the grave before their time ! ”

"Father, father, stop," gasped the wretched Ferrand, "hear me — do not condemn me — I will prove to you that I am not guilty, unless, indeed, the love of what is good, benevolent, and beautiful, be guilt ——"

"Say no more, say no more!" ejaculated the enraged Heinrich, "don't talk to me of the blandishments of a sorceress, who has outwitted a vain boy — look there! — look at those blue eyes bursting from their sockets — look at those lovely lips, torn and bleeding: where is the mind that made them dear to us all, and the comfort and delight of my old age; and who — who has done this?"

Oh! faith — love — confidence! Are ye proof against every thing? Will ye be lacerated, torn, scoffed at, condemned — nay, even cursed, and yet remain true to the love-lorn Welleda? Will the ignorance and narrow-mindedness so lately removed, return, and shut up the portals of the mind to every just and generous emotion?

Ay, — yawn wide, ye gaping wounds of the unseen heart! Ay, so it was with Ferrand! — "Here!" cried he, with wild fury, "take the ring — I will redeem it, if she be true — and die if she be indeed what you say — a fiend!"

So saying, he pulled the ring, a beauteous sapphire, from the finger on which Welleda had placed it, as a talisman of proof, cautioning him never to remove it. It was to be the spiritual emblem of his undoubting faith. Alas! see it now — given up in fear, incredulity, dread, and despair. A livid flame arose from the brilliant gem, and scorched it to a cinder! — "Look — look! hell-born! accursed!" screamed old Heinrich, "see the very smoke of hell arising to confound you!"

The poor maniac saw it, and laughed long and loudly; but Ferrand rushed from the cottage, pursued by that hideous sound, to Welleda's castle.

And how had Welleda passed those very dreadful hours which were the sequel of a too dangerous happiness? She wandered impatiently from one apartment to another; and at length, desperate and perplexed, hastened to the Chamber of Futurity, where magic mirrors had always revealed to her whatever she wished to know respecting herself or others. What was her horror, when on entering she observed the purple curtains slowly rolling down, and concealing the mirrors for ever from her view! "It is just," exclaimed she, clasping

her cold hands together ; " she who has sacrificed all to the present, must not expect any thing from the future ! " Scarcely had she uttered these ominous words, when her own name resounded through those marble halls in frantic and fierce tones.

Ah ! who shall say what struggling nature feels when the first blow of despair strikes on the chilled heart ? Who tell the sickening agony of the drooping spirit, and the palsied sense ? What voice is so dreadful as the voice of the beloved one, when anger breaks its melody ? And what creature is so meek, so humble, as the doating, timid, trembling woman who hears it ? Alas ! love's dream was indeed transient, scarcely had its transparent beam touched the threshold of enjoyment, when dismay and darkness closed upon it.

" Welleda, Welleda," shouted Ferrand, forgetful of all consideration for her he called on, " where are you ? Speak, angel of sin ? "

" Heavens ! Ferrand, dearest Ferrand, is it to me you speak ? Protect me, thou hallowed shade of my adored mother ! save me from such cruelty and degradation ! Oh, have I not sacrificed all ? "

" Not enough, not enough, Welleda ! Divest yourself of all those hated mysteries — prove yourself human if you can, or witness my eternal death ! "

" Take them, take all — Ferrand ! " exclaimed the injured Welleda. " I live for you only, of what value are these glittering toys to the scathed heart ? " So saying, she tore from her neck a wreath of orient pearl, she snatched from her lovely forehead and her taper waist the star and zone, and her beautifully formed feet were divested of their purple clothing. — " Are you satisfied, cruel Ferrand ? "

" One thing more, Welleda, and I am — "

" What is that ? "

" Meet me, to-morrow, at the Forest Fountain, before the assembled villagers ; just as you are, without one of these accursed baubles, and then be mine by all ties divine and human ? "

Is it necessary to say that Welleda promised ? — could she refuse ?

Ferrand left her — yes, he left her — to herself, to her sorrow, to her remorse !

But no — the noble-minded Welleda had no remorse. She

had indeed sacrificed all to love — but the very sacrifice implied a virtue, and she was not likely to disfigure her generosity by regret. She remembered indeed her mother's prophecy, yet she was even content to "perish by misguided love" rather than live without it. Right, Welleda, right! it is better to die than live unloved, uncared for, alone, barren, and desolate!

On entering the cottage Ferrand found all quiet. Amalia slept. Some delicious oblivion had miraculously fallen upon her. The exasperated feelings of the family had subsided into the fitful ebbings of restlessness and dreams. Ferrand crept unobserved to his bed. "To-morrow," thought he, "to-morrow will decide my future fate."

He slept — as we hear some criminals have done the night before their execution. Despair is exhausting — and man's body is infirm.

Sleep on, Ferrand! it is the last time that you will sleep soundly.

Welleda! unfortunate, self-devoted Welleda! was there no sleep for thy woes? Did the burning thought within shine through thy ruined peace? Welleda trembled in her own magic castle — she feared the creations of her own genius — all was distorted — life was a heavy burthen — yet annihilation was beyond it! She resolved to pass the night in her favourite grotto, and accordingly hurried through the secret garden to it. But oh! who met her on the very threshold? Grinning triumph — diabolical triumph — satiated revenge — Wredmar! the detestable Wredmar!

Poor Welleda had lost the noble courage of innocence, that sacred barrier between the devilish power of Wredmar and her own more spiritual superiority.

He had indeed been her early instructor, and when he gave her the purple flower in the plains of Upsala, he gave all of himself that was worthy her acceptance. In that mystic flower was concentrated the better genius of Wredmar, and having once placed it in so secure a deposit, he could never resume it. But when the purity of his lovely pupil rose superior to all temptations, then he was obliged to resign the palm of supremacy, and the white bird was Welleda's guardian spirit.

We know already that when poor Welleda gave herself up to Ferrand, the flower proved a very exact emblem of Wredmar's malice. We know too that the death of the white bird was but the type of Wredmar's approaching doom.

The sudden appearance of Wredmar was frightful to Welleda; but after the first moment of surprise was over, she assumed all that was left her of womanly dignity and natural courage. "You are here to witness and accelerate my fate, Wredmar!" she exclaimed; "not to arrest it?"

"Not exactly," answered Wredmar; "You may even now avoid the destiny that the angry Nornes are preparing for you. But I do not expect thus much of wisdom and gratitude from you."

"I understand you," replied Welleda, raising her youthful head with graceful pride; "I understand you, and resist you. Let the awful Nornes be satisfied, I am ready to appease them, and to seek my mother's shade in the world of spirits, to which I feel that I am hastening."

She turned to walk away from the presence of the gloating fiend, who now sought to win her to a hateful association with his arts, by the operation of fear. He sprang after her, laid his withered hand upon her arm, and muttered close to her ear—"Look—look, mad girl! perverse Welleda, look at your fairy castle!"

Welleda did indeed turn towards it involuntarily, she half hoped to have seen Ferrand at its entrance gate. But no, the tasteful and costly edifice was sinking fast into the earth, and Welleda saw its last pinnacle entombed! She broke from the cruel grasp of Wredmar, and rushed into the forest.

The next morning it seemed as if the sun had scarcely power enough to lift the heavy mist from the bosom of the valley; but when at length his beams had broken through all impediments, you might see numerous groups of villagers in their best attire, talking mysteriously together, as if some great event was about to happen.

Presently old Heinrick, his wife, and Bertha, made their appearance. "Well, neighbour, how goes it with Amalia?" asked one of the crowd.

"Oh, don't ask—don't ask!" groaned Heinrick.

Just at the conclusion of this desponding sentence, the crowd of peasants opened to admit the young man, whose unbridled haste seemed as if it would bear down every obstacle before it. "Here is Ferrand," whispered the shuddering villagers.

And it was indeed Ferrand, striding on to the Forest Fountain; but his bitter feelings could not be restrained as he

passed through the throng of sneering or terrified villagers. "Come, come on, cowards!" exclaimed he; "come and see your accursed folly, and ask pardon for it from her, the innocent and injured one."

He strode on, careless of the insults which such an address was likely to bring upon him. He could hear, he could feel nothing of external outrage. But something from within screamed "death!" into his ear, and something echoed "Welleda!" in his heart.

The younger peasants, offended by his rude words, were nevertheless half afraid and completely awed by his daring manner, and they tacitly agreed to think him deranged. "Why should we quarrel with a madman?" said they to each other. So they followed, as rapidly as they could, the difficult path which Ferrand had chosen. Just then a shriek from a female voice, and a yell from Ferrand, came down upon them all with terrific strength. They hurried on, old Heinrick and his family at their head.

At the Forest Fountain, bathed in a stream of blood that gushed from her loving heart, lay the beautiful, the exquisite Welleda. The wretched Ferrand was vainly endeavouring to quench that flood of life. At his feet was a she-wolf—dead, strangled by his despairing grasp. This ferocious monster, prowling near the spot, had realised the dreadful prophecy which overhung the fate of Welleda. "Wolf's brat—wolf's brat—thou shalt be devoured by one of thine own brood!"

Who shall survive the loved one? He who lived but in her life? No, let death grasp both in his iron arms—let the same grave close over them—and the same eternity await them.

When Ferrand had long clasped the corpse of Welleda to his heart in speechless agony, he looked down upon her composed features—calm, cold, and fixed. "Dead!" exclaimed he at length; "Welleda is dead, and I have killed her!"

His heart broke in that fierce pang. He was laid at her side beneath the lime-tree that shaded the fountain; and from that day, for centuries down, the scene of this tragedy has been, and is still, called "the Wolf's Brun."

THE LEGEND

OF

RUPRECHT'S BUILDING.

It seems almost inconsistent with modern habits to identify the good and intelligent father of a family with the successful ruler of a kingdom ; but it may be refreshing to look back a few centuries for a more natural state of things ; to see, in thought, the palaces of princes cheered by the happy sunshine of domestic endearment, and then to contemplate with added interest the picturesque ruins that bring such scenes to our imagination.

I have wandered often through the splendid court of Heidelberg Castle, and gazed on each separate fragment with painful admiration ; but I do not think that any point sends its influence so at once to the heart as the little Gothic Glo-riette of Louis the Third. I call it *his*, because he hallowed it by finding leisure to fulfil, beneath its small arched roof, the sacred duties of a father. He educated his two children himself, procuring for them, at the same time, all the advantages of skilful masters ; and the fifteenth century was rich in these.

I will not, however, rob this portion of the ruin—I mean the large square building of which this window is the solitary ornament—of its claim to be valued, exclusively, as the most ancient part of the whole castle. It was commenced by the Count Palatine Rodolphus I., towards the year 1300, and completed by his son and successor, Adolphus, in 1325. Think of its grey hairs—I mean its grey stones!—not that the stones of Heidelberg Castle are grey, except where the influence of the weather has produced the fascinating neutral tints, for the deep red granite gives warmth and richness to its mouldering walls. The mountains which brace in the

Neckar from Heidelberg to Neckarsteinach, with the exception of a few rocks opposite the abbey of St. Eubourg, produce nothing else; and some exhausted quarries in the immediate neighbourhood of the castle itself are specific criteria of its enduring materials; whether glowing in the blushing sunset, or melting into phantom outlines in the morning mist, they are almost equally beautiful.

COUNT Ruprecht was the next princely architect; and added his long and now most gloomy palace to that of Rodolphus and his son. Probably his visit to Rome on the occasion of his being crowned by the pope "Emperor of the holy Roman kingdom of the German nation," inspired him with the useful ambition of embellishing the proud residence of his ancestors—the noble burthen of the Jettenbuhl. At all events he was enabled to borrow much from Italy, and to nurse the rising talents of his son and successor, Louis the Third, our good father of the Gloriette. The liberality of Ruprecht induced many artists to give up their classic ground for pecuniary and personal advantages, and the young Louis knew how to value their instruction.

He, in his turn, encouraged and protected all who had taken a share in his own education, and retained them by munificence and friendship in his castle, as the future tutors of his children. Amongst these, he was more particularly attached to the two most youthful; the German Kemnat, and the Italian Geronimo Benini. Both of them had married into his household, and seemed to have become fixtures in the establishment; both, too, were fathers; and the good and generous Louis saw no objection to including the young Raffaele and Eugenia as pupils of the Gloriette, wishing to excite emulation in his juvenile academy, and perhaps to illustrate his own estimate of real merit in this simple and pleasing manner. Let us think we see the interesting group, while the many-coloured beams of the morning sun peer in through the antique stained glass of the window, and brightly etch it. How touching the variety of beauty and expression, from the paternal dignity of Louis, the shrewd sagacity of Kemnat, and the melancholy pathos of Geronimo, to the boyish, yet graceful, gaiety of the elder prince, the fine and thoughtful features of his brother, the classic contour of the young Italian, and the fairy loveliness of the little girl. But this is only a

glimpse ; we must gallop with time, and find all these young people advancing rapidly on the beaten track of man's existence.

Louis saw his children's progress with the satisfaction of a virtuous parent, who has felt his responsibility and acted up to his sense of duty. There was a vast difference between the two young princes. Louis was amiable and agreeable, but not talented ; whilst his brother Frederick, silent, thoughtful, vigorous, soared high above him : but this disparity never injured their sweet fraternity of affection.

Louis invariably consulted Frederick in all his youthful enterprises ; and Frederick never failed to uphold his brother, and even joined in sports that he scarcely liked, for the sake of pleasing him. Louis was accomplished ; he loved music, and danced well, for nature had endowed him with every pliant facility.

Frederick hated dancing, and at length obtained his father's permission to abandon it ; but he fenced gracefully, rode well, and showed much taste in architectural design. He was always planning some improvement for the dear old castle. His happy father listened to all his proposed changes or additions with affectionate pride ; and often told him, that had not the public funds been so reduced by his own father's expenses in building, and supporting the troublesome dignity with which the electors had invested him, he would gladly listen to Frederick's schemes.

The talents of Raffaello were running parallel lines with those of his noble associate, with this difference, — Raffaello preferred sculpture to architecture ; he excelled also in music and singing ; and danced as well as Prince Louis himself. Still there was a pensiveness and a daring that united him more closely to the younger prince. Frederick was always with Raffaello when Louis did not want him. And dear little Eugenia, the fair child with hazel eyes and golden hair, how old was she ? She was just fifteen ; beauty was in the blossom, and the flower grew lovelier with every added day.

Old Kemnat — for he really was growing old — gazed on his innocent child, and wished that he had married earlier in life. His wife had long been dead ; but, after the first years of loneliness, his daughter filled up the void in his heart ; and he only seemed to live for her and his adored pupil Frederick. The favourite prince often passed whole evenings in the apart-

ments of Kemnat; and thus time hastened over the flowery paths of youthfulness and unalloyed pleasure, and no one noticed its quickened footsteps.

Oh, spring of life ! oh, morning of the mind,
Bursting with youthful vigour, glorious, bright !
Pause ye of wintry mood, and thought confin'd,
And bless, for once, this image of delight ;
Cherish the young with kind encouragement,
So shall ye, yet, redeem the time misspent !

It will scarcely be supposed that the young princes were allowed to possess all their superiorities without exciting in certain noble families, whose views of education had been more limited, envy, hatred, and malice. The old Count de Luzelstein, the proudest and most powerful vassal of the electorate, contented himself with muttering some ill-omened prophecy, that all would not end well. His two sons, Wilhelm and Franz, were nearly of the same age as the princes; and his only daughter, Leonora, though only sixteen, was the admiration of all who had seen her in her dawn of beauty. She was an exquisite model of personal perfection; but, like all the females of the age, she was condemned to a very limited education, and her infant pride and passions were pampered, until they became totally insubordinate, and defied all restraint. She had no mother. Her father doted on her beauty, and he had no mind to sympathise with or cherish mental charms. He was glad that the elector had no daughter, and he pleased himself with dreams of ambition, that placed his child on the throne of the palatinate. Young Louis had long been betrothed to Margaret of Savoy; he therefore was beyond reach: but Frederick might still be his son-in-law. In short, he only waited for a favourable opportunity of making the proposal to the elector. But death interfered between his ambition and its object.

In the year 1450, on the last day of the month of August, the castle bell was heard to toll. The centre tower echoed the mournful repetition of the funeral knell, and the church of St. Peter, and the recently completed one of the Holy Ghost, in the adjacent town of Heidelberg, mingled their melancholy music. The troops were drawn up on the Place d'Armes; groups of the inhabitants were seen here and there, conversing apparently in a low tone, and universally dressed in black:

some dignitaries of the university were winding their way up to the castle by the northern entrance; and a procession of Carmelite monks were following them at some distance, bearing torches and various religious symbols. It was the funeral of the good elector that called forth this display of pious pomp. Louis, on his death-bed, had commanded that his funeral should be as simple as might be consistent with the dignity of the country of which he had been so long the chief; but he desired that his people might follow him to the grave. Best homage to a good and patriarchal sovereign. He was followed by *one large family*. The old and the infirm, who could not walk, were carried in litters by their children or friends; and every house was empty, for no one would be left behind.

Many tears were shed, and many heart-felt and fervent prayers were carried along the immense concourse. All was finished. Money was distributed to the poor classes by the almoner and mayor; and the dark columns of people moved away with heavy steps from the scene of interment.

But how describe the grief of two affectionate sons, and numerous devoted followers? Grief was new to Louis and Frederick. Louis sank beneath its pressure during the first few days; but he soon rallied. It was too heavy, too dreadfully irksome to his weak yet lively temperament; and he thought he was making a great effort to shake it off when, as a matter of course, he turned his thoughts to the reception of his bride, and his own coronation as Elector Palatine. It was a seasonable relief for him: and he fled away from grief as from something too serious to encounter. But Frederick hugged his affliction, and brought it near to him. He knew the depth of his sorrow, yet did not fear to plunge into it; and, though no one knew how much he suffered, because he shrunk from every public demonstration, yet no one suffered so much or so long.

The death of his beloved father had a decided influence upon the ripening of his energetic character. He wandered about the forests of the surrounding mountains, and gave himself up to reflection. After many hours' wandering, on one of these rambling excursions, he sank, exhausted by fatigue and despondency, on the Giant's Stone, an enormous mass of granite, detached from its original bed by some violent shock,

and which still hangs above the town of Heidelberg on the mountain side. For the first time, yes, the first time since the death of his invaluable parent, Frederick wept. Who can tell the luxury of tears, to those who seldom weep? Frederick sat upon the Riesenstein, threw his arms upon it, and buried his face within the close circle that they made. It was within a few days of Louis's coronation and marriage; for both ceremonies were to take place on the same occasion. The fair Margaret was installed with some of her relations in Rodolphus's building; and the first ball since the death of the elector, was to take place in the Rittersaal, or Knight's Hall, of Ruprecht's palace.

Louis was excited; he loved his affianced bride passionately; but the fever of conscious deficiency haunted him by night and by day, and made him feel the coming dignity of elector to be insupportable. He would have been glad, in the romance of early and mutual affection, to have occupied a cottage on the banks of the smiling Neckar, so that his idolised Margaret had been content to share his fate, rather than ascend the throne of his father, and feel that he was not made for it. He was, indeed, in the greatest distress of mind; when suddenly an idea of happy promise flashed across him. Might he not associate his brother with him in the sovereignty?

Blessed be that singleness of heart which does not envy the superiority of a brother! Blessed be the pure affection that rejoices in it! Thrice happy Louis and Frederick! Louis clings proudly to his brother for support; and Frederick's noble nature yields it with humility!

Louis had employed several hours in seeking his brother. His heart was full to overflowing: he longed to pour his whole soul into the fraternal bosom that ever flew wide open to his embrace. At length, at a distance, he thought he recognised the manly figure of Frederick, as it lay stretched upon the Riesenstein. He still wore his black dress; and the graceful abandonment of grief was so new to Frederick, that Louis started in admiration of it.

Just at this moment a tall and elegant figure, on the acclivity of the mountain, withdrew. It was Raffaello, who followed Frederick unseen; but who retired on perceiving that Louis was approaching the prostrate prince. The timid and truly affectionate Louis feared to interrupt a sorrow so violent

and so private ; but his last footstep had aroused his brother, who suddenly started, in the dread of having been observed by a stranger. But when he recognised his dear Louis, he opened his arms, and both brothers rushed to the embrace. They stood, locked in each other's arms, for some minutes, a united pillar of strength. At length the tears of Louis having produced upon himself all the soft refreshment of a summer's shower, he ventured to interrupt the deep sobbings of his brother, in broken sentences : — " Oh, Frederick, dear, dear Fritz, you are unhappy, while I am thoughtlessly hurrying on to seize new pleasures ! Why did you not check me ? I feel *now* that I have not long enough lamented our dear father, and that the consummation of my marriage so soon after his death will be indecent. Tell me, Frederick, my own true friend, do you not think I had better defer it ? "

" No, no, dear Louis," replied Frederick, recovering with a powerful effort from the effects of his recent passionate burst of feeling ; " Not at all, my brother. Nothing can be more consistent with the wishes of our deceased father, than your hastening to assume the dignity which he has left you ; and as to the fair Margaret, you cannot choose a better moment for sharing it with her. May it be a halo of glory round you both ! I am sorry that I should have distressed you so much, but the recollection of my father had overpowered me. Come, let us retrace our steps to the castle, and see how the Rittersaal will look with Raffaello's new piece of sculpture. He told me something of the design, and I confess I thought it particularly happy ; but he begged us to refrain from seeing him working at it ; so I suppose there is some little mystery about it intended to surprise us agreeably. "

Frederick had thus skilfully diverted his brother's thoughts into the right channel ; and the bridegroom elect was full of the decorations and festivities that were to grace his nuptials. I believe he forgot, in those gay moments, the throne and every thing else ; and his kind brother kept up the excitement till they approached the western gate of entrance, arm in arm. The guard turned out, on either side of the gate, and the youthful and handsome brothers acknowledged their salutations in their usual condescending and graceful manner. But no soldier at that time was so thoroughly stiffened into etiquette as to forbear exhibiting on his countenance the radiant

smile of devoted attachment; and their idolized Frederick always took occasion to say a few words to some one or other of them, which as surely were the boast of the supper-table for that evening. Louis's easy temper, and proverbial kindness of heart, had already procured him the name of the *Debonnaire*; but no one proposed, as yet, an epithet for the future hero, who was destined to win by repeated victories that which now follows his own.

Just as the brothers were traversing the old parade-ground of the castle, the loud challenge of the warder of the northern tower proclaimed the arrival of some important guest.

"That must be old Luzelstein," exclaimed Louis, "and his fair daughter, my Margaret's bridesmaid. Let us hasten to receive them."

"Do you go, my dear Louis," answered Frederick, "and leave me to make my appearance in Rodolf's Hall. I confess I am not just now inclined to present myself to the Lady Leonora; and therefore I shall just go and look at Raffaello's new production. I see he is expecting me; there he stands in the window:" so saying Frederick withdrew his arm from that of Louis, and disappeared.

Louis hastened forward, through the northern gate to the rampart terrace, from which he could observe the party that were approaching the castle.

He had judged rightly. The old Count de Luzelstein was conducting Leonora on her white palfrey. The old man himself, in travelling costume, rode by her side on a superb black charger, that strained its curved neck with pride, and snorted loudly, as if it intended some hostile attack upon the castle walls. Two knights in brilliant armour, attended by their squires, followed; and the rear of the little party was closed by retainers and serving-men of all descriptions. At some distance from the Luzelstein train appeared new guests, emerging from the valley formed by the Jettenbuhl and Friesenberg. These were the Bishop of Mentz, accompanied by the superior of the Carmelite monastery at the foot of that ravine. A numerous procession of monks and episcopal soldiers and retainers were following the bishop and the bare-headed Carmelite at a very respectful distance; for they seemed to be engaged in some very interesting conversation.

We will leave Louis to receive his noble guests; and ima-

gine that he appeared to the best advantage, as he welcomed the old count, and gallantly assisted Leonora to alight. No doubt the haughty beauty condescended to appreciate the attentions of the young elector ; and perhaps she thought that had she only been seen before Margaret, her victory over the soft heart of Louis had been matter of certainty. Never mind ; many a proud enchantress deceives herself more grossly than her admirers. We will hope that Louis could look upon a beauty that surpassed all that he had yet seen, without either being dazzled by it, or contrasting it for one moment with the natural graces of his unaffected bride. The heart, and not the eye, must decide such points as these.

When Frederick had mounted the spiral staircase of Ruprecht's tower, and gained the second story, he entered the beautiful Rittersaal ; and was instantly greeted by the enthusiastic Raffaello, who sprang forward to meet him. " Noble and dear prince," exclaimed he, " now my courage fails me, and hope seems to die within me. Should you not like my work, I shall be seized with utter despair."

" Never fear, never fear, my good Raffaello, when did you ever fail to excite my warmest admiration ? Let me see this chiselled perfection." Raffaello hid his face in his hands from nervous sensibility the moment his prince advanced towards the rich mantel-piece, over which was placed his *chef d'œuvre*. It was such, indeed, but the most exquisite part of it was not ideal !

" Beautiful, beautiful ! Why, Raffaello, how is this ? Whose face and form have you borrowed for your Angel of the Resurrection ?" Raffaello had darted towards Frederick the instant that the welcome word of praise escaped from the lips of the prince : but when this last question was put, he blushed, and tried to stop the sigh that answered it.

" Poor Raffaello ! he loves her ; I thought so," said Frederick, seeming to talk to himself ; and then, turning abruptly to his trembling and interesting companion, he added, " I'll tell you what, Raffaello, nothing would give me more pleasure than to see the sweet daughter of my faithful old Kemnat united to the friend of my early youth." With these kind words, he caught the young artist to his breast, in a momentary embrace. Raffaello, overcome with a variety of emo-

tions, fell upon his knee, and grasped the hand of his benefactor, with gratitude too lively and too deep for expression.

Just at this critical moment, when it was difficult to say which of the two individuals was most affected, the superb doors that connected the hall of Ruprecht with that of Rodolf, flew wide open ; several court pages and servants lined them on either side ; and then Louis came forward, with his usual thoughtlessness, leading the transcendant Leonora, beaming with pride and anticipated triumph, to introduce her to the beloved brother, who, the world said, was destined to call this rich gem of beauty *his*.

Nothing could be more unfortunate than this well-intended surprise. Frederick felt shocked by it ; not offended—he for he could never blame his affectionate brother. But the too evident emotion, in which he had been detected, and Louis's first exclamation, placed him in rather a perplexing situation ; and the violet eyes of the Lady Leonora flashed at once their glance of haughty indignation on the mystery.

" Bless me," cried Louis, incautiously leaving the young lady by herself, " bless me, what an exquisite likeness of our dear little Eugenia !"

One of the knights, in the glittering armour, now came forward, to the support of his sister, and offering his arm, said with marked emphasis : " We surely are intruding upon Prince Frederick's admiration of this piece of sculpture ; let us withdraw : Margaret of Savoy has just sent forward her page to request your presence in her private apartment."

" Certainly, I attend her," quickly breathed, rather than spoke, the mortified Leonora. But had she known that the seemingly cold and offended being, who folded his arms across his breast and leaned for support against the centre pillar that held up the groined ceiling of the hall, was feeling, for the first time in his life, the electric thrill, the homage to that beauty which the enraptured heart afterwards longs to appropriate, she would have felt that moment the proudest of her existence. She had seen and even possessed a portrait of Frederick, drawn by Raffacello, which the superior of the Carmelite monastery had contrived to purloin during the exercise of his *duties* as confessor to the late elector. He had conveyed it to Count de Luzelstein, who wished to inflame the

ardent mind of his daughter, and thus prepare her as the principal instrument of his ambition.

We may judge how easily this was accomplished ; and how impetuously Leonora entered into the scheme of working her way to the throne of the palatinate. When, therefore, Prince Louis invited the whole Luzelstein family to be present at his nuptials, and proposed that the Lady Leonora should remain principal lady of the court, after the marriage, the count and his daughter accepted the arrangement with alacrity, and even with apparent humility. Wilhelm and Franz, the two brothers, hesitated some little time to sanction it by their approval. They detested the hard necessity that constrained them to do homage to the elector ; and having lately enrolled themselves as members of the famous Secret Tribunal, their morose and fiery tempers assumed a degree of arrogance which they had not reached before. Their infirm old father was positively afraid of them ; and never dared to do any thing without consulting them. But Leonora was too much like them to quail at their frown, or obey the angry stamp of their feet. If they upbraided, she ridiculed ; and the domestic party of Luzelstein Castle was any thing but harmonious.

Wilhelm von Luzelstein had been once defeated by the young Prince Frederick, in a tournament given at the castle of Luzelstein. This was never to be forgiven : and though he at length consented to his father's plans respecting his sister, no cordial wish of success accompanied his tardy permission, to have her enrolled first lady of the court. It was he who stepped forward to conduct his sister from the Rittersaal ; and uttered the words we have quoted, in his most contemptuous manner. They fell unheeded on the ear of him whom they were intended to provoke ; and he saw Leonora vanish from the spot, without addressing a word to her. Louis, whose attention had been engrossed by various details of the sculpture, was quite unprepared to find himself, his brother, and the artist, the only persons left in the spacious chamber. " Holy Mary," he exclaimed, " Where is the fair lady that I escorted hither ? "

" She is gone away with that perverse brother of hers," answered Frederick.

" The Princess Margaret sent to request her presence," rejoined Raffaello.

"Indeed! then I bid you both farewell; but Frederick, will you come to my closet to-night, I have something of the greatest importance to tell you?"

"Certainly," replied Frederick, slightly wondering at the sudden earnestness of his brother's manner, but too much pre-occupied to attach any very definite idea to it.

"It would not be amiss, I think, to dress, for the afternoon wears away, and this ball is to begin early," continued he, and as the Italian mirror hung before him, he involuntarily glanced at his own image. Nay, he went further, he even desired Raffaello to accompany him to his private chamber, and choose his dress for the evening. We may be sure that the artist heard this proposition with delight; and determined to make the noble model wear its best looks.

This was a gay day for the town of Heidelberg. All its hotels were filled with the guests, who had been bidden to the balls and tournament; and many a fair girl hoped to obtain a due share of the admiration and gallantry of the noble cavaliers. But she who was calculated to win the secret homage of all hearts, was the least conscious of her power. We have observed that degree of silence towards Eugenia which her ingenuous modesty seemed to claim; nevertheless we have thought of her, as she sat in her aged father's small but very neat apartment, drawing something that Raffaello had left her to copy, or reading some Italian poem that he had lent her. Her sylph-like form, too, was sometimes seen wandering in the direction of the Wolf's Brun; but not even Raffaello presumed to follow her, when she was alone. With every advantage that nature and education could bestow, Eugenia was the most diffident and sensitive of her sex.

When, therefore, the amiable Margaret of Savoy received her as her future attendant, she could not fail to love her with the protecting fondness of an elder sister. All this condescension did not overwhelm the gentle Eugenia; for had she not been from her childhood the companion of princes? But she felt grateful and devoted, and loved her benevolent mistress with enthusiasm.

We may then judge the surprise of Leonora, when, on entering the apartment of the bride-elect, she saw the living representative of the beautiful statue, sitting at Margaret's feet; whilst that lady herself was wreathing a coronet of white roses,

in the flowing ringlets of her favourite. Leonora started at the identity of the one, and at the occupation of the other. Margaret rose to receive her guest, with easy grace, delighted at her beauty ; for no one could see her, and not feel the influence of its first impression ; and anxious to dispense with the useless ceremonies of recent acquaintance, she began a sprightly conversation on the approaching ball. This was a subject on which Leonora also could be voluble ; and the two ladies were soon involved in a discussion of the merits of Genoa velvet, brocades, silver tissues, and other delicate and costly accessories.

In the mean time, Eugenia had risen from her lowly posture ; the white rose coronet falling on her neck with the abundance of silken hair that had been thrown into such pleasing confusion by the princess ; and she still held in the fold of her loose and simple drapery, numerous spoils from the flower garden, not knowing exactly what to do with them.

The keen and almost harsh look that the lady Leonora sent from time to time towards her, seemed to destroy her presence of mind at once. Eugenia saw her future bitter enemy before her ; and perhaps there is some instinct in the human mind, that teaches us to shudder when an unfriendly being approaches us. If not, — the mere animals are better off, in this respect, than man, the master-piece.

"What is the matter, child ?" said the light-hearted Margaret. "Don't be afraid of appearing to any disadvantage, because I have let those imprisoned locks fall down upon your shoulders ; I assure you, it is very becoming, is it not, Lady Leonora ?" added she, turning to look for the acquiescence of her new acquaintance.

"Oh ! certainly, yes, undoubtedly, your highness's taste must be good ; but may I ask the name of the fair damsel ? I suppose she is not always called the Angel ?"

At these words Eugenia turned deadly pale, and seemed ready to faint. The warm-hearted princess ran and caught her, as she was sinking on the floor. "Good Saint Margaret, be my speed ! the child is ill ; and the ball-room may lose one of its best ornaments."

"Indeed !" rejoined Leonora, slightly turning away from an excess of condescension that appeared to disgust her.

Eugenia rallied, and pressed the princess's hand to her lips, asking her permission to retire for a short time to her own apartment. This was of course instantly granted. Eugenia curtsied as she passed by Leonora, who disdained to notice her salutation. She hurried through the numerous corridors, and reached her own tasteful little apartment, ready again to sink with the apprehension of some concealed ill. She threw herself upon her couch, and wept bitterly.

The slight refreshment that went by the name of Vespers had been served to the different apartments of the castle; and now every one was seriously engaged in the important business of the toilette. Frederick and Raffaello were seen walking in the garden, near the fanciful arcade and water-works, that were looking beautiful in the sunset. They then struck into a new path, and mounted to that commanding terrace which overlooks the whole plain of the Rhine, girt with its sapphire mountains. "This is indeed glorious!" ejaculated the prince; "and I am quite in the mood to enjoy it this evening. You know, Raffaello, that there are times when every thing pleases us; and I believe the prospect of my beloved brother's happiness, together with that which I intend for you and a certain very angelic person, has had its full influence upon my feelings. There is some spell at work, surely, to reconcile me so soon to this gay clothing of mine; I thought I had vowed to wear black all my life long!" And before Raffaello could recover from his pleased surprise, his friend had dashed down a shady path, waving his hand in such a manner as to forbid his following.

Frederick reached the castle by one of the semi-subterranean passages which led to it from the grotto; and he went direct to old Kemnat's apartment. The old tutor was dressed in the court costume of the times, a strange mixture of Italian and Spanish taste and extravagance with German homeliness and solidity. He was in the act of giving a finishing polish to the hilt of the long and heavy sword that was destined to hang by his side, and as his back was turned towards the door, he did not see the prince enter. Like most old people, he was fond of hearing himself talk; and when he had no one to listen to him, he usually talked to himself. Frederick was in so happy a frame of mind, from rejoicing over the welfare of those he cared most about, that the fastidious nicety of

Kemnat's operations was vastly amusing to him ; and he involuntarily placed his finger on his lip, and leaned against the wall, to gaze upon the silver hairs of his venerable favourite, and listen to his soliloquy.

"Never tell me," muttered the old man, "those Luzelsteins are a proud race, and no good will come of their being here. I'll warrant me, Count Wilhelm does not forget my darling's thrust, at the tilt-yard yonder ; and, what's more, he does not mean to let it go unrevenged. And then, they have not enrolled themselves in the list of underground demons for nothing, I'll warrant it ! No, no, the Secret Tribunal tells no tales. Well, well, that will do now : this old sword of mine has seen its best days, but I would not part with it for all that ; did it not kill the monster that turned upon my young prince ? "

"Ay, that it did !" said Frederick, coming forward, and clapping old Kemnat on the shoulder affectionately, "that it did, my good Kemnat ; and I shall be glad if I can ever do you as great a service."

Kemnat, who loved his former pupil as a son, was full of duties and observances, and more precise in his ceremonies towards the princes than any court calendar. He withdrew, with many bows, several paces in a direct line facing the good-natured Frederick ; who, laughing heartily at the ludicrous effect of his sudden appearance upon the old tutor, followed him close up, stretching out his hand, and saying — "Come, come, Kemnat, no more ceremony, for the love of the palatinate lion itself ! You must sit down in that chair and have some conversation with me, for I have something to say to you before I enter the ball-room, that is blazing there with so many lights."

"Your highness, I am ready to hear your pleasure," replied Kemnat, full of those half-indulged, half-restrained smiles so becoming to old age ; and his grey eyes twinkled with real pleasure, on perceiving that his darling, as he always called him, to himself, had regained his cheerful manner.

"Well then, sit down," said Frederick, throwing himself into the opposite chair. Kemnat obeyed mechanically ; but took care to withdraw his chair far from the familiarity of parallel lines with that of his guest, and sat bolt upright, in all the rigidity of courtly respect.

"You are growing old, Kemnat."

"Yes, may it please your highness."

"Why, as to that, I cannot say that it does exactly, though the older you grow the better you are, like the wine of a good vintage." Kemnat made one of those incurvations, and uttered one of those slight ejaculations, that speak pleasure better than words. "But, as I was saying, you are growing old, and you must, I think, be anxious to see your only child married and happy, before you can think of leaving her."

"Ah! very true, prince," said the father, touched at the mention of his dear Eugenia, "that is indeed my anxious hope; and I am sure if your highness will condescend to point out to me the man who will make my child a good husband, I shall die contented when my time comes."

"Then, Kemnat, though I claim no influence in a matter in which your daughter's feelings must be left to themselves, still I must say that I know the man who loves her dearly, and who will not, I think, deceive me in my high-raised expectations of him. After the exhibition of the new piece of sculpture, that was seen by all in the castle this afternoon, I need scarcely tell you that I mean Raffaello."

"Raffaello!" exclaimed the old man, in astonishment, "why it never struck me. To be sure, it is very likely that the young man is attached to Eugenia, for they are almost always together; but then I never thought of that, because it was so natural to see those who have been brought up together fond of each other's society."

"Yes, we seem all to have been marvellously blind to the probable influence of Eugenia's beauty and amiable character. It would seem as if we all intended to place her among the tutelary saints of the chapel, and worship her as something too good to belong to this world. However, the urchin god is not so careless of good materials; and he has wounded the heart of poor Raffaello past redemption."

This tribute to the goodness of his beloved child was too much for the proud father; and he tried in vain to dash away the tears that started from the fountain of paternal pride. "Psha, psha, my prince must forgive this weakness, in an old man who has long leaned for support and consolation on the dear prop of age, an affectionate and dutiful child."

"Forgive it, Kemnat! I honour it. But now that I

have had this opportunity of doing justice to my friend Raffaello, let us drop the subject, and leave the young people to themselves. Come, Kemnat, come with me to the ball-room ; you are dressed for a squire of dames to-night, and I shall expect to see you flirting with some of the professor's ladies from the world beneath." The old man chuckled, modestly denied the imputation, and followed the prince to the magnificent saloon.

When Prince Frederick entered the ball-room, his eyes were riveted on its principal living ornament, Leonora. She was standing by the mantel-piece, engaged in animated conversation with the Bishop of Mentz, and apparently discussing the piece of sculpture above ; the design of which was evidently intended as a feeling tribute of respect to the patriarch who was now no more. I shall venture to describe it on this account ; and I hope the delicate squeamishness of modern taste will not condemn it, as the production of a young and Germanised Italian, who did not remember ever to have seen the country of his birth, the classic land of his inspiration.

A death's head, surmounted by an hour-glass, formed the base of the piece. On either side of this emblem of mortality were poppy plants ; two of which came out from between the teeth, as if to signify the eternal sleep of all-devouring death ; for these two delicate tendrils mounted towards the hour-glass above, and there two serpents curled round them and cropped their flowers ; thus completing the allegory. But above all this, was the winged angel of the resurrection, the conqueror of death.

In the dawn of the fifteenth century, and in an ancient castle of Germany, the association of ideas which such a design produced was pleasing and in keeping with the spirit and taste of the age. Too great a refinement of execution would have been less striking, that is, less intelligible ; therefore Raffaello's youthful genius was the admiration of all present : and Leonora, as a matter of course, gave her approbation with the rest, envying, however, each separate tribute of particular praise that was addressed to the personal loveliness of the angel statue. Neither Raffaello nor Eugenia was in the room. Raffaello was an artist and a lover ; and he nervously forbore to witness the criticism of his work or his mistress : few, however, knew that the angel was on earth.

Frederick now walked towards the bishop, and requested to be formally presented to his fair antagonist in argument, and be allowed to espouse her side of the question, be it what it might.

This easy flow of gallantry was somewhat new in the grave prince ; but we must trace it back to old Kennat's apartment, and rejoice in the relief it afforded to the individual himself. Leonora was enchanted by the ardent gaze of her intended victim, and allowed one of nature's most felicitous expressions to light up her features. We may be sure that neither study nor apparel was spared on so important an occasion ; and if we could only look at some of Titian's costumes of the fifteenth century, we might fancy some slight approach to one or other of them in the tasteful dress of Leonora.

I shall venture to describe it, without being as minute as it deserves. The exterior robe was of rich purple velvet, edged with a brocade of gold and rosettes of pearl ; beneath it was a white quilted satin petticoat, with the same brocade pattern, the pearl rosettes being exchanged for large purple flowers belonging to the uncarthly gardens of imagination ; long loose sleeves left the moulded arm all possible freedom, and enormous bracelets of many-coloured stones, weighed on the taper wrists ; the rich brown hair was plaited in numerous bands, and strings of pearls bound it round the beauteous head. The rounded form and warm complexion of the fair bride's-maid were seen to the greatest possible advantage in this costume, of which incontestable verity no one was more thoroughly convinced than herself. And let us allow full scope to Frederick's rapturous contemplation ; for how could he guess that so perfect a temple had been sullied by an impure thought ? Yes ! let beauty enslave the eyes, but immaculate goodness alone can fix the heart. The triumph of fair looks, without the enduring stamp of innate worth, is the *ignis fatuus* that leads us on through the night of early passion, but fades before the daylight of conviction. We must not therefore blame the ingenious Frederick for falling desperately in love with the object before him. He had scarcely a thought or a look to bestow on any one else. His sister-in-law clect, with all the quick-sightedness of woman, saw how much he was struck with the new beauty of the court, and began to rally him playfully on his various inattentions to the rest of the

party. She invited him to dance with her, and then made him over to Leonora, enjoying the expedient which had made it impossible for Frederick longer to refuse. The prince smiled at the trick, and sacrificed his consistency to the witcheries of a splendid ball-room, and the contagion of beauty's smiles and music's sounds.

When the dance was in full career, Raffaello ventured to steal into the room, certain of being unnoticed, and anxious to watch the graceful movements of her, whom he thought of seeing there, the partner of some one for the time more fortunate than himself. But the concentrating power of a lover's eye will turn with instant disappointment from the most thronged crowd of loveliness, seeing with a single glance that the only one it wished to find is absent.

Raffaello thus immediately discovered that Eugenia was not in the Rittersaal; and he quickly moved towards old Kemnat to inquire the reason of so unusual an absence. "To say the truth," replied old Kemnat, "it is the very thing I cannot account for myself; and I have been ogling one of her highness's pages for the last hour, to make him come over to me that I might ask him; but the careless young caprer is pleased to disobey me."

Need we say that a lover's fears are as prompt as his glance is rapid, and that they do a world of imaginary mischiefs in their lightning course?

Raffaello suffered all the tortures of suspense, and was on the point of gliding from the room, when Margaret of Savoy espied him, and beckoned him to her. Alarmed at being discovered, the young Italian hesitatingly approached the august group. "This is our artist," said Margaret to the bishop, "and I am anxious to know if he can account for the prolonged absence of the fair lady of his inspiration."

Raffaello was surprised and confounded at this palpable inference; and for the first moment since the completion of his favourite work, he feared he might have offended the lovely being whom he had thought to honour. A vivid flush told the quick passage of this harrowing thought across the chamber of the mind. He said, in an under tone, "I fear, your highness, that my too presumptuous likeness keeps the more angelic image from the room."

"Very probable," exclaimed the princess, good-naturedly

amused at the lover's high-flown-style. "Hugo," said she to the careless little page who would not pay any attention to the nods, winks, and contortions of old Kemnat, "go to the Gloriette chamber, inquire for the young lady Eugenia, and say that I desire her immediate presence."

Can my reader consent to the violent charm of contrast? Exchange the glare of hundreds of wax-tapers, for the moon-light ray that stole through the beautiful window of the old Gloriette, and give up the glowing Leonora for the pale beautiful girl that was leaning on her hand, over the marble table, which she could remember as far back as when she was not able to reach its margin?

It is after all a great relief to follow the conceited little page, however sorry we may be that his message should disturb Eugenia's reverie.

"Oh, how dreadful!" exclaimed Eugenia when the page had closed the door; "how dreadful to be gazed at by every one, and called, in mockery, 'the angel!' Raffaello, Raffaello, what made you think of giving me so painful a distinction?"

It must be owned that Eugenia's present trial was formidable to a pure-minded and modest girl; but let us admit, nor do dishonour to even her modest mind, that after a few moments' reflection, the natural dignity of an elevated spirit controlled the weaker fears of her nature, and that she walked towards the spacious door-way with a composed yet unassuming step. We may imagine the calmed serenity of her features; the delicacy of her complexion, unbreathed upon by the heated air of the ball-room; her simple dress too, white as the coronet of roses which lay as gracefully on her head as if Nature's hand had dropped it there; and to please the fancy of Margaret, many of the long natural ringlets were suffered to fall down upon her beautiful shoulders; in short, she looked very much like a bright visitant from the world above.

She gently opened the half of the massive door; and Kemnat, who had coaxed himself round to that part of the room as soon as he saw Hugo sent on his mission, stood ready to conduct his daughter to the foot of the temporary throne that had been erected for the princess. Eugenia might scarcely have contrived to reach it alone, but the glad face of her father restored her confidence, and she approached her august

mistress like one of those fairy clouds that seem to wait upon the moon.

Margaret received her in her usual gracious manner, and pointed to a small stool that was near the recess occupied by the throne. Eugenia was glad to find herself seated in so quiet a nook, and began to survey the scene before her with evident pleasure. The dancing now ceased; and Prince Frederick led Leonora to her seat, by the side of the princess, on a lower platform of the dais. Leonora involuntarily started when she saw Keinnat's daughter so near her; and Frederick recognising the playful associate of his childhood, looking more ethereal than I have described her, suddenly thought that he could not pay a more welcome or appropriate compliment to his young protégé Raffaello, or gratify the feelings of his old tutor so effectually, as by continuing his sudden dancing propensity in favour of Eugenia. He therefore, to the indignation of Leonora and her brothers, absolutely vouchsafed to solicit the young lady's hand as his partner in the dance. Nothing can be more distressing than a mark of attention to which we think we are not entitled; and the trembling girl looked hesitation and amazement at the prince and Margaret. But Margaret, very much pleased at what she thought a well-timed compliment to herself, in the selection of her favourite for the highest honour of the festival, immediately said aloud, "Right, right, prince; we will allow you to break your resolution a second time; I want to see Eugenia dance to-night."

We know that there was another person in the room who had long wished for the same gratification; and when he saw the sweet flower of his fancy led forth by his gracious prince, his heart beat all its pulsations twice over, and he felt that he had never been so happy before.

Oh! love, thou exquisite mischief—what disguised poisons dost thou mix with the cup of life! What steals the maiden blushes from Eugenia's cheeks, and leaves them like transparent alabaster? And then again the eloquent blood comes back, in buoyant and agitated movement, to tell the tale of every new and thrilling emotion concealed within her heart. Her cold and tremulous hand rested in the friendly pressure of the prince's; and Eugenia seeming to herself to dream, swam through the graceful dance with all the touching ele-

gance and facility of motion, which one truly exquisite feeling will infallibly give to every look and minor impulse.

* She seemed born for that one hour; then only to have lived, and to have wished for death when its last moment flew away! And poor Raffaello! Was he destined to awaken this unbidden allegiance of the heart's most sacred feelings? Had Eugenia ever heard him declare the passion that he cherished more than life? He never told her that he loved her; and she never thought of him in any other light than in that of an affectionate brother.

But she loved!—fondly, timidly, intensely, and—hopelessly! The blameless boundings of her virgin heart were known however only to herself, and she hushed them into silent adoration. It was happiness enough to the disinterested Eugenia, to see the noble object of all these feelings the pride and glory of the palatinate; to listen to the warm incense of praise which the people sent up from their grateful hearts; and hear or conjecture the benevolent sentiments of the youthful sovereign.

We will not disturb her self-devotion, but we must feel for Raffaello, when the following morning brought to his inexperienced heart the cruel certainty, that Eugenia did not love him.

But we may not pause upon his sorrows, they may be infectious; and at any rate we must hasten on to their termination. I shall leave the glittering tournament undescribed; and merely say that haughty words passed between Count Wilhelm and Prince Frederick, which must have ended in an immediate combat, had not his brother's marriage, on the very same morning, restrained the prince's burning indignation. Louis had revealed his ardent wish that Frederick should help him to support the weight of the administration, and he had consented to do so. The brothers therefore might be called joint-electors; and no one will doubt the fact of one of them being merely nominal. It was Frederick who reigned, and Louis who gladly withdrew from affairs so uncongenial with his disposition. Many important improvements were begun in the castle, and the foundation of the grand eastern tower laid; that beautiful and stupendous ruin, which says a thousand inarticulate things to us as we gaze upon it in mournful admiration.

And now let us suppose many months to have been shrouded in the past. Let us see the happy Louis wrapt up in the new charms of married life, anticipating the proud joys of a parent, and delighted with the success of his brother in all his negotiations and improvements. Let us turn from a tale of guilt that was whispered about the court, respecting the sudden illness and very necessary absence of Leonora of Luzelstein, and see her return to the castle, hoping to conceal the temporary cause of both from all mortal observation.

But there was no secret that Kemnat could not work out of its place, and the unerring aim of hatred fixed a just stain upon the character of Leonora. It was not however judged necessary to make it public; and Frederick, the former captive of her beauty, and the avowed suitor for her hand, contented himself with renouncing all claim to so high a honour—for private reasons.

We are not to suppose that he could do this with impunity. The brothers of Leonora were now her sole protectors, for the old count was dead. Still, as Frederick had duly given in his resignation to the hand of the lady herself, and scandal was already stalking on, the affair was too delicate to render a public challenge expedient. Moreover the two young counts had made preparations for throwing off the authority of the electors altogether. It would have been folly, therefore, to have precipitated matters. Private assassination seemed to minds like theirs not only the safest but the best medium of revenge; and the enraged and degraded Leonora heard the proposition without one pang of regret.

One lovely moonlight evening, when the first fall of snow had covered the earth with dazzling white, Frederick and Raffaello were watched by a hooded villain, as they walked together along the mountain road that leads to the Wolf's Brun. The prince was talking of various plans for the fortification of the castle, and trying at intervals to sound the depths of his friend's melancholy. A favourite mastiff was the companion of their walk, and it was fortunate for the prince that the faithful animal was more alive to treachery than himself or even his companion.

A low growl from the dog made Raffaello suddenly turn round; and the next instant he sprang forward to receive in his arm the bullet intended for his prince's heart. The dog

had also made a movement as instantaneous, by leaping upon the breast of the assassin, and thus slightly changing his aim and bringing him to the ground as soon as the short gun was discharged. There was no time for wonderment. Raffaello fell into the prince's arms, apparently lifeless, the instant he turned round; and the murderer's choking curses and the fierce triumph of the dog that held him down, explained the whole transaction in a moment. Fortunately Frederick had his hunting horn at his breast; and trusting to the immense strength of the mastiff, he still held with one arm the bleeding body of his friend, and blew a loud shrill blast that echoed in a thousand mountain voices. Fortunately there were some straggling soldiers near. Hearing the shot, and then the horn, they rushed to the spot, in the expectation of finding some one of the bristly savages of the wood struggling with the huntsman.

As soon as Frederick heard footsteps, he called aloud, to hasten the approach of the soldiers, whose shouts he recognized. The foremost of them was a young lieutenant to whom he was much attached. "Here is treachery," exclaimed the prince, "my friend Raffaello is I fear mortally wounded; do you support him, Otho, and let me see whom we have here."

"God forbid!" screamed Otho, in utter disobedience; and darting on the prostrate villain, he instantly dispatched him. At the same moment, the faithful dog dropt dead on the ground: the assassin, whose throat he had seized, had buried his poniard in the side of the poor animal, who still held him in the grasp of death to the last moment of his own existence.

"It is Huberto, the squire of Count Wilhelm Von Luzelstein," cried Otho, looking into the dead man's face.

"I thought as much, replied the prince, making immediate arrangements for the conveyance of Raffaello to the castle, and giving an order to one of the soldiers to summon the most celebrated surgeon of the town to the assistance of his friend.

A few heavy sighs and a slight shuddering assured Frederick that Raffaello still lived; but the distance to the castle appeared interminable, until they fairly laid down the precious burthen in the apartment of old Kemnat. We must not dwell on the mingled consternation, rage, and sorrow, of its ancient and respectable inhabitant, nor say how often he

quoted his own foresight of the base designs of the Luzelsteins.

The grief and affectionate attentions of Eugenia were an admirable contrast to the useless garrulity of the old man. When Raffaello's corpse-like countenance first met her glance, she felt that she could have loved him for his brave devotion to the prince; nay she half reproached herself for refusing to unite her destiny with one who was capable of such generous friendship towards the real idol of her heart. But alas! how quickly did this generous feeling vanish before the contemplation of Frederick himself, who was watching the operations of the surgeon with an interest so intent. "He loves the friends of his early youth!" whispered Eugenia to herself.

Happily Raffaello's wound was not dangerous, and time and quiet only were wanting to restore him again to health. He was carefully removed to his own apartment, which joined that of his prince; and Frederick gave up his few hours of leisure to the sick bed of his friend.

The obvious treachery of the counts of Luzelstein, and the failure of their nefarious purpose, brought on the explosion which they thought was to free them from their allegiance and dependence. But they little knew the talent of the hero whom they defied, and still less could they judge of the enthusiasm of the soldiers he led on to victory.

Frederick reviewed his troops in the large square of the town of Heidelberg allotted to parade: it is the very spot now occupied by the museum and other buildings. A procession of the Carmelite monks came slowly from their monastery, the gloomy walls of which then occupied the whole of the Carl's Platz. They came, headed by their crafty superior, to bless the enterprise of the morrow. Father Paulus had, however, some very contrary design to this; and after the ceremony of the review was over, he endeavoured to sound the feelings of some of the officers towards the prince their commander. Careful and cunning as he was, something escaped from him of so doubtful and sinister a nature, as to alarm the loyal bosom of young Otho of Gemmingen and his brother Adolphus. They accordingly gave the hint to the wary Kemnat; and the old guardian's apprehensions were so much roused, as to make him almost insist upon the constant personal attendance of the two young officers in question upon the prince, even to their sleeping in the same room with him, Frederick's resolute mind

rejected all these precautions; but the entreaties of Louis and Margaret made him yield.

The morrow broke in delicate and roseate streaks upon the mountain valleys. A white frost covered the trees, that seemed to tremble with their icy foliage; long crystals hung from the rocks in a thousand fantastic shapes, varying the dark shades of their many-coloured patches of moss and herbage; and the whole scene presented an aspect of winter loveliness scarcely inferior to the verdant richness of its summer dress.

The gallant prince, attended by his chivalrous suite, rode upon a Moorish steed of exquisite shape and fine action; but the noble bearing of the rider was alone observed or thought of by those he left behind in the castle, as long as they might distinguish his suit of black armour and the dark plume waving on his helm. The brilliant pageant moved away, gazed on by poor Raffaello, who now regretted his wound and subsequent illness for the first time. But the approaching confinement of the electress created a divided interest; and an infant prince was born before the maiden victory of his uncle Frederick.

The unfortunate infant, who brings the greatest of calamities with it as the first anecdote of its existence, is an object of most painful sympathy. One hardly knows whether most to regret its birth, or compassionate its motherless condition. It is placed in its father's arms as the immediate cause of death to its other parent. He cannot all at once love it; he must from the earliest moment pity it; and then, Time's soothing unction opens his heart, and he may, in the end, doat upon the innocent and helpless being.

It was at least thus with our wretched Louis. It has been already shown how unequal he was to bear the weight of grief; and so dreadful a shock as the death of the electress was overwhelming. He was seized with a violent fever, and thus spared the consciousness of all the sad ceremonies that were taking place.

The most distressing form and idea of death must be replete with minute and harrowing details; and the mourner would do well to avoid all such aggravations. Death is mysterious; and its shadowy form is its best relief; it is a sleep — a translation; the beloved one is taken away from you; she exists elsewhere; she is no more on earth, she is in heaven; she lives there! She is not dead; you may talk to her, think of her, pray to her; and feel that she hears and answers! But

the narrow prison of the coffin and the grave seems to limit, stifle, and destroy all that is ideal in death.

Frederick heard of his brother's affliction and illness at the same moment ; but he could not fly to console him. He had already defeated his enemies, but he was determined to make the haughty counts his prisoners ; and to humble every vassal who had joined in their rebellion. He wrote to Raffaello, begging him to be constantly with the elector.

Louis had passed through all the distressing stages of fever, and now sank into a state of weakness, bordering on inanition ; he had, as a matter of course, the best medical advice that could be procured ; but it was necessary that one watchful eye should always be upon him, and the faithful Italian seldom closed his.

Four weeks after the death of the electress, the physicians declared that life was at its lowest ebb, and that the succeeding night must determine the fate of the sovereign. During the night he was to take the most powerful stimulants and opiates, alternately ; but the greatest judgment and decision were necessary in the person who should administer them. Not one of the physicians would undertake the heavy responsibility alone ; and it was evident that together they would never come to the same conclusion, at the same moment ; and a moment, even, might be of consequence in such a case. Raffaello, the delegate, as it were, of Prince Frederick, and the constant attendant on the sick Louis, did not hesitate to incur this further trial of his strength ; he clearly understood the situation of the patient ; and like all persons of strong minds, in similar situations, he had more confidence in himself than in any one else.

The castle was silent as the sleeping infant in its nurse's arms. None but the selfish could sleep on such a night ; and with the exception of the Lady Leonora and her attendants, every eye was waking.

Raffaello was, of course, alone in the sick chamber ; and let it not seem incredible, if I say, that he could not feel anxiety. The immense exertion, the utmost tension of nerve and thought permitted no emotion to ruffle his equanimity ; therefore, when he saw the light of life just trembling in its socket, he mechanically 'poured the stimulants down the patient's throat ; and when the livid flame of fever began to flash upon the

cheek and scorch the lip, he calmly and instantly gave the opiate.

In this manner the young man passed the eventful night. It was five o'clock in the morning ; the elector was peacefully sleeping ! he had done so for the last two hours. Oh ! luxury of success ! Raffaello could not support it ; he felt the dangerous trial which he had sustained, when its excitement had passed away ; and he fainted in his chair by the bed-side. But the exquisite sense of hearing retained some of its vibrations ; and a heavy sigh from Louis was the restorative for his attendant. Just at that moment a bright gleam of sunshine rushed into the room through the door that some rash hand had ventured to open. It was poor old Kemnat, whose fears had become insupportable after listening at the key hole for upwards of an hour, without hearing even a breath. Eugenia, too, had stolen from her watch beside the baby's cradle, and left the door of the chamber ajar. In taking one precaution she omitted another, for when the little thing awoke, and uttered its piercing cry, it was impossible that the sound should not enter at the half open door of the sick room.

Oh, happy sound—the father's heart hears it ! Louis opened his eyes ; Raffaello's almost started from his head ; Kemnat shut his close, as if he would not witness the mischief he had done ; the agony of the moment was fearful ! Eugenia grasped her father's arm, and stood trembling by his side. Again the infant sent its wailing appeal to the elector ; he was awake—he heard it—a few moments and then—"My child, my child ! give it to me, give it to me," exclaimed poor Louis.

Holy Nature, this was thy remedy ! The babe was brought, and laid in its father's arms ; he feebly pressed it to him, and burst into tears. Every one else wept, but tried to smother their sobbings. "Raffaello," at length said the elector, faintly, "place it by my side, and let me sleep again."

The elector recovered rapidly ; and the triumphant return of his brother Frederick, surnamed, on this occasion, "The Victorious," tended not a little to accelerate the languid beatings of a care-worn heart.

The Counts Von Luzelstein were compelled to do public homage at the castle, together with other revolted vassals ; Frederick, too, had strengthened the electoral throne by new and important alliances and friendships. The future Charles

the Fifth was on terms of the greatest intimacy with our hero ; and time had much in store for him. He might then safely defy every thing but treachery ; that loathsome thing which stalks abroad unseen, and darkens with its shadow a whole vista of glory.

After the submission of the counts, they returned to their castle, to plot against the life of their generous conqueror. " Let us have no more to do with private assassination, Wilhelm," said Heinrich, the younger, to his brother. " Huberto, to wit," gloomily replied the elder ; " no,— I will employ no more bungling cowards ; I have a surer way for bringing down my game, I flatter myself."

" The Secret Tribunal ? "

" Ay, to be sure ; we were dunces in presuming to act independently of it ; and we have been severely punished for it, I think. But I am not Count Wilhelm Von Luzelstein if I suffer the disgrace of yesterday to go unrevenged ; and here I pledge myself, in the name of the Holy Tribunal itself, not to sleep, nor eat, nor drink, until I have devised my plan of ruin."

" Our sister will help us in that, I believe," maliciously added Heinrich.

" Don't speak of her, Heinrich," replied Wilhelm, with deep emphasis.

Early the next morning the two brothers left the castle on horseback, and unattended. We shall not accompany them, though we are bound to tell the particulars of their mysterious journey.

" I accuse Frederick, Count Palatine, of detestable heresy, and of a secret compact with the Evil Spirit, to whom he has sold his immortal soul, for the assurance of continued success and victory ; and to the truth of this I pledge myself, as a member of the Holy Tribunal, and hold myself in readiness to avenge the same upon the body of the delinquent, in such manner as shall be judged fit and expedient by the present assembly." So saying, Count Wilhelm placed his iron gauntlet on the table that stood in the midst of the gloomy cave where the Secret Tribunal held its sittings. As soon as he had retired to his seat, Count Heinrich came forward, and repeated the same ceremony.

The decision of the tribunal was consistent with its awful

and clever system of entrapping its victims, and we shall see how nearly successful it proved.

The baptism of the young prince was to be celebrated by a tournament ; and this was made known by proclamation, inviting all valiant knights to feats of chivalry.

The splendid residence of the electors was not likely to be empty when the friendly voice of invitation was abroad.

The feasting, hunting, and tilting went gaily forward ; many illustrious strangers were present, and some amongst them, in the mysterious spirit of the times, claimed the privilege of incognito. This was readily granted, and religiously observed ; it even gave a flavour to the entertainment, and joy flowed on in an unchecked channel. Louis was once more himself ; the variety of the scene had raised his spirits, and the young heir to the palatinate had his full share of credit in restoring his father to health and enjoyment.

Two valiant knights were particularly distinguished by the elector on this occasion. They displayed each day some new munificence, and paid the most marked attention to Louis. Many conjectures were started by the inquisitive household, as to who they might be, but their largess silenced each servile tongue ; and the credulous retainers whispered that they were foreign princes at the least. Louis himself inclined to the same opinion ; and under its influence exerted himself to add to the honourable reception and attendance of his disguised guests.

The week was nearly over, but the last day of it was to be celebrated by the most splendid tournament that had yet taken place. The palm of knighthood and chivalry was to be contested, and the fortunate winner who should maintain himself against all the five opponents who were to challenge him was to choose the queen of beauty from the glowing galaxy before him.

Each manly bosom beat high, each woman's heart swelled in anxiety and pride, when the auspicious morning stole into brightness and smiled on the glittering scene.

The Place d'Armes was the arena ; numerous galleries were fitted up on the western and southern sides for the ladies ; and a superb pavilion was to contain the elector and his court.

There was great bustle in the court-yard ; horses and armour were undergoing all kinds of examination and correction by the careful squires ; but the six knights were all to

depend upon their own caprices for armorial bearings and devices ; and their various accoutrements were to be a profound secret to all ; their very horses were to be chosen promiscuously, as each challenger left the drawbridge.

The castle bell struck ten. Immediately after a loud and cheerful flourish announced the approach of the first knight.

Now he who first entered the lists was to be considered the challenging knight, and to try his fortune with the other five separately ; if he fell, his conqueror must challenge the remaining four ; and so on, until but one remained.

The successful champion of knighthood and beauty was to receive a golden-hilted sword from the hand of the elector, bearing on its point a coronet of silver roses for the brow of the fair queen whom he should select to do the honours of the ball-room for that evening.

To add to the imposing effect of this concluding day, a fairy bridge had been thrown across the moat, from the large Gothic windows of the Kaisersaal, the beautiful hall in Rodolf's ancient building. The ladies were to reach their galleries by this device ; and, as the herald's trumpet gave the signal, the fair creatures stepped delicately forth in all the pride of conscious loveliness.

Eugenia's modesty made her almost the last in the train. Leonora de Luzelstein headed it. Louis now entered the pavilion with his immediate attendants. Kemnat was not excluded we may be sure ; he had lately taken upon himself the office and dignity of historiographer, and the old man looked more important than usual.

The six heralds were now seen making the circuit of the tilt-yard at full gallop. They performed this evolution several times ; and at length, he who had been foremost all along, leaped the barrier at the entrance, and curbing the noble animal he rode, planted himself in the very centre of the yard, and bowed gallantly to the elector.

"Your message, sir," said Louis, returning the salutation.

"I am here in the name of the knight of the white-rose wreath, to defy to mortal combat, in the cause of chivalry and beauty, any five knights who shall accept the challenge."

A herald beneath the pavilion now blew his trumpet, on a signal given by the elector. He then spoke :

"A gallant knight, bearing the device of the white-rose wreath, hath defied to deadly combat any five knights who

shall separately accept his challenge ; there are many brave nobles present, let their heralds appear."

- Upon this the other five heralds, all abreast, leaped over the barrier, and blew the scornful note of acceptance.

"Your titles, gentlemen," said the elector's herald.

"I am the messenger of him who carries the lion's mane for his device."

"And I of him who bears the golden sword."

"My master defies death, and takes its emblem."

"And mine," said the fourth, "is of the bleeding heart."

There was a pause ; the herald of the court looked at the fifth herald, expecting him to speak, but he remained silent.

"And you, sir, whom may you represent ?"

"My master wears the plain shield, and is the nameless knight."

The herald looked up towards Louis, as if doubtful of his allowing this title.

"It will do, it will do," quickly ejaculated Louis. "My friends and guests are at liberty to assume or disavow whatever they please ; and the nameless knight may win a name this very morning. Sound the trumpet, and let the knight of the white-rose wreath appear."

As the last note rushed through the air, a noble figure, well mounted, stood at the entrance of the tilt-yard ; the barrier was instantly withdrawn, and the champion walked his superb and restless charger to the appointed stand, taking care to salute the elector as he turned and backed into it.

Numerous armed knights now entered, and filed off to the eastern side of the yard, and drew up their horses abreast ; each was attended by his squire, and the whole was a goodly array.

The herald of him of the white-rose wreath now blew a triumphant peal, which made the castle rocks ring.

The knight of the death's head galloped into the tilt-yard—and his herald answered the challenger's defiance.

"Forward !" exclaimed Louis, animated by the approaching hostilities.

How many female bosoms were beating ! How much curiosity was excited ! But the disguise of the two knights was complete ; their armour was new, and no one could say who either was.

Eugenia's heart told her that her hero would be there ; the

being of her worship — for she did not venture to think she could love him, she only knew that she could love no other. The image of the princely Frederick was shrined within her inmost thoughts. It was her essence and her life, and nothing but a broken heart might tell her secret. It is true that melancholy had touched each sweet expression of her face, but heavenly beauty still seemed to plead against its own despair.

Without knowing the intended distinction of the victor knight, Eugenia had innocently crowned herself with a wreath of roses. She had remembered that her last mistress had chosen it for her, as the ornament best adapted to her unspoiled graces ; but it was a most unfortunate decoration on the present occasion.

The moment that the Lady Leonora (now Countess von Luzelstein) saw the sword and silver wreath lying on the velvet cushion in front of the elector's pavilion, with the words, "To the victor knight," embroidered upon it, she turned quickly round to the ladies of the court who were standing nearest to her, and exclaimed, "There is one here who intends to bespeak the wreath for herself, I think ; and probably the Fraulein Eugenia knows who her champion yonder is?"

At this moment the elector gave the final signal, and the two knights rushed to the attack. He of the wreath performed the various preparatory manœuvres with grace and steadiness, and seemed rather to be amusing himself with the finesse of his art than hazarding his life and reputation.

The death's head knight showed some impatience. His movements were sudden, though he displayed nearly equal skill. Still a certain restlessness and eagerness to take advantage of any slight unguardedness, on the part of his opponent, looked vindictive.

At length the horse of the first stumbled, and the latter charged furiously and wounded the other in the side. This was enough to rouse the spirit and prowess of the champion ; he suddenly wheeled round, and came at once upon the flank of his adversary's horse, who reared, and fell back upon his wounded rider. The shock was tremendous. Every one thought that the knight of the death's head must be crushed to pieces, but the spirit of evil could not so readily part with one of his agents.

The gallant champion, considering this an unfair chance in

the knightly game, dismounted, and ran to help the prostrate chevalier from the ground ; but the fallen ruffian seized the offered hand with a strong grasp, and simultaneously attempted to thrust his dagger to the heart of his brave conqueror. The knight of the wreath did not suspect treachery, but his activity saved him from it ; he sprang back several paces, and snatching the light battle-axe that hung at his side, he darted forward and aimed a steady blow at the loathsome image on the assassin's casque. The spectators were breathless. The stroke loosened the joints of the visor, and levelled the offender to the ground.

" Enough, enough !" loudly exclaimed the elector. " Remove the vanquished knight, and let the gallant champion be more worthily matched."

Two attendant squires now approached the knight, who had been stunned, but not seriously injured. They lifted him from the ground ; and they, and only they, saw, through the loosened visor, the sallow features of Count Wilhelm von Luzelstein. A tent was at hand, and surgical attendance ; and the herald of the death's head dismissed the squires, and closed the hangings on his crest-fallen lord. We will leave them.

The cheerful herald now approached his noble master, doing the double duty of squire ; he examined the trappings of the horse, buckled on such parts as had been thrown into disorder, examined the edge of the battle-axe, and replaced it in the knight's belt. A messenger soon entered the pavilion, to tell the elector that the vanquished knight was unhurt.

" So much the better," replied he, with heat : " it would have been a pity that the blood of such a caitiff should have stained the honour of a brave knight."

The champion bowed gracefully ; the Lady Leonora was observed to turn deadly pale, but a flush of anger soon replaced the livid hue. Eugenia's bosom throbbed, — " Could it — oh ! could it be ? was it indeed he ? " No one heard these aspirations of the maiden's heart.

The court herald gave the signal for renewed combat ; the champion again entered the lists. But we must not minutely detail how he of the lion's mane, the golden sword, and the bleeding heart, each and all were discomfited. This was not done, however, without much exertion and some risk ; and the blood was seen trickling through the various crevices of the

brave knight's armour, while he withdrew for assistance and refreshment to a tent close by. In the interval, however, old Kemnat came within earshot of the elector, and said, in a low tone, —

“Your highness's pardon! But surely the champion knight can be no other than ——”

“Hush!” said the elector, “wound not his fame by breathing the name he is pleased to honour in obscurity.”

Kemnat bowed and retired; but the idea of the nameless knight gave him great uneasiness, he knew not why.

The champion returned; the ladies hastened to the front of the galleries; the by-standing knights leaped on their horses; the court herald and the champion's blew the note of defiance, and the herald of the nameless knight answered it. The knight followed. He was dressed in plain black armour, and without plumes, but his elegant figure and graceful bearing were only the more conspicuous.

The combat was begun: the champion rode a new horse, and the last of his opponents was as well mounted as himself. The spirited animals seemed identified with the skilful riders who directed their movements; the white foam dashed from their mouths, their eyes were fire, and their necks a rampart. The elector was enchanted with the gallant bearing of both knights, and seemed to forget the possibility of danger to either party, in the contemplation of this masterly display of art, in an exercise which he appreciated in theory, but of which he did not envy the practice.

It was beautiful! it seemed as if the very clash of sword or spear had a distinct and regulated music. The ladies waved their scarfs and handkerchiefs. Eugenia involuntarily clasped her cold hands together, and felt a dizziness creeping over her brain; Leonora looked on contemptuously; and old Kemnat opened his mouth wide, until the dry air parched his tongue and throat.

At length the champion's spear wounded the nameless knight's horse in the neck; the animal was thrown back upon its haunches, and its rider sprang to the ground before it fell. The noble conqueror leaped from his, to meet the knight on equal terms. A murmur of approbation ran through the stately row of armed nobles, and the gallant combatants vied with each other in activity and skill.

At length a smothered groan from the deep chest of the champion told how much he was suffering from various slight wounds and over exertion. This sound seemed to electrify the nameless knight: he sprang back several paces and gracefully dropt upon his knee, laying down his sword before him. The champion, astonished at this sudden relinquishment of combat, drew back in his turn, and looked towards the pavilion for an explanation, pointing with his sword to the immovable knight, who seemed a bended statue cased in steel.

"How is this? what may this mean, sir knight?" eagerly asked the elector. Upon this the nameless knight started on his feet, threw up his visor, and rushed into the arms of his late opponent.

All was now confusion. The nobles, squires, heralds, all came forward; the elector himself, preceded by the page Hugo, carrying the velvet cushion and its glittering ornaments, and followed by his impatient train, left the pavilion and entered the tilt-yard. But old Kemnat was there before him. "The prince, the prince! I knew it, I knew it!" shouted the overjoyed old man, with a hundred extravagant gesticulations.

"Which, who, which is the prince? What prince?" asked Louis and twenty others, in a breath.

"*What* prince! Where then is the second? Where is he who could do as Prince Frederick has done to-day?" replied the stout-hearted Kemnat.

"My dear, dear brother!" exclaimed the elector, approaching the champion, whom the faithful and anxious herald, young Otho Von Gemmingen, was already unharnessing.

"This, then, is yours," said Louis, taking the sword and wreath from the cushion.

"Will your highness permit me to do an act of justice with this?" asked Prince Frederick, receiving the sword from his brother's hand, and taking the silver wreath from its point.

"*Permit* thee, Frederick!" replied the elector, embracing his brother, who bowing his thanks, and approaching him who had entered into the lists on a day when they were open to every gentleman as well as noble, and who had modestly forbore to wear those appendages of knighthood which were customary on such occasions, the prince said in a firm tone, "Kneel, Raffaello!"

The young man obeyed; and Frederick, striking him on the

shoulder, exclaimed, "Rise, rise, sir knight, and from this day Baron of Durkenheim!"

Raffaello folded his arms across his breast and arose. "And now, no longer *nameless*, accept the sword which you might have won had not your diffidence restrained you."

"Noble, noble Frederick!" exclaimed the delighted brother; "let us follow the ladies to the Kaisersaal: they are escaping from us."

The Lady Leonora had in truth led the way to the fairy bridge, and all the tremulous ladies followed her, enchanted with the denouement they had just witnessed, and marvelling much who would—each thought she knew full well who *ought*—be chosen as the queen of the night.

Yet there was one who had no courage to follow the giddy group, one who never dreamt of her own supremacy; and *she* was left alone, and sank down upon a couch in fear and weakness.

The elector and Prince Frederick led the way, and the whole court followed them over the bridge into the Kaisersaal.

After congratulations, flatteries, simperings, and sighs were profusely exchanged between the prodigal courtiers, the elector turned to his brother, and saw with alarm how pale he looked. The prince was indeed exhausted; the pleasurable excitement of recognising his beloved Raffaello in the valiant stranger who had so skilfully opposed him, had checked for awhile the faintness that was overpowering him when the groan escaped him which enabled his faithful follower to make his fortunate discovery in time. Frederick in short fainted, and was carried to his private apartment; the ladies being spared for the time all perturbation on their own account.

The sumptuous banquet was served, but the exhausted prince did not attend it. The queen of beauty had not yet stepped forth in her loveliness; and there was much conjecture wasted on the occasion.

We left Eugenia on the couch of the curtained gallery. In the bustle and excitement of the recent scenes, Prince Frederick's illness, and the banquet, she had not been missed. Kemnat and Raffaello were in the apartment of their adored hero; and when at length they left it with him to breathe the open air, they concluded that she was occupied with her toilette,

or with some minor arrangements for the grand ball of the evening. Poor Eugenia! she was forgotten, and she was lost!

Kemnat, though unsuspecting of any sinister accident, was nevertheless uneasy; he was full of fancies, and an instinct of restless impatience led him to wander back to the busy scene of the morning. As the surrounding part of the tilt-yard was thickly covered with sand, his footsteps were not very audible, and as he was deep in thought, he forbore his usual proceeding of talking to himself.

Just as he entered beneath the scaffolding of the pavilion, he thought he distinguished voices: he paused and listened. There were certainly some persons whispering near him. Kemnat did not like whisperings; he thought them ominous of guilt; and now he was silent in earnest, for his misgivings brought proof of a conspiracy as firmly and readily as real evidence would have convinced a less suspicious man.

Presently the whispering ceased, and four figures glided from the curtained gallery. Kemnat strained his eyes to distinguish them, but they were all within the deep shade of the projecting gallery. The moon, however, shone brightly beyond it; and as the figures turned round the corner towards the castle, Kemnat saw the objects of his unceasing and it now appeared his just suspicion, namely, the two stranger knights, the Lady Leonora, and the banished superior of the Carmelite monastery! This was an awful conjunction of evil stars. The Lady Leonora was not absent from her toilette to study astronomy — the two strange knights were her brothers — and the crafty old villain was helping them to some diabolical plot. Such were Kemnat's prompt conclusions. He waited until the group had had time to reach the castle, and then he stole away, big with the important secret. He went immediately to Frederick's apartment: the prince was not there; the page said he had gone with the Baron Von Durkenheim to the Kaisersaal. Kemnat hastened thither. He found the prince and Raffaello gazing at an oil painting, which he soon knew to be the portrait of his daughter. Above it was suspended the silver wreath.

"Here is Kemnat," said the prince, "coming to witness the installation of my queen. I can find nothing more beautiful or more virtuous than that," pointing to the painting, "so my

fair friends must excuse my partiality, if it be such. Raffaello thinks my selection unexceptionable, and I suppose you will agree with him."

The glad father poured forth his thanks in all the fulness of affection and gratitude; but when their first ebullition was over, he added somewhat mournfully, "Do you know, prince, I cannot tell where my daughter is all this time; I have not seen her since the glorious tournament."

"Never fear, Kemnat," answered Frederick; "she cannot fail to know her merit, and she is shrinking from my acknowledgment of it."

This was not very probable. However the proud father thought it so; and he now proceeded to tell the story of the gallery. The prince and the young baron were struck by the curious circumstance, and promised to be on their guard. It was not, however, thought necessary to interrupt the pleasures of the evening by any abrupt disclosure; and thus they separated for the completion of their toilettes.

Prince Frederick observed a look of peculiar malignancy on the countenance of Legnora, when she entered the ball-room, and saw her lovely rival's portrait, decorated with the envied wreath. He thought it was womanly jealousy and scorn, but that withering look appalled Raffaello, and he felt that it had a victim.

He left the ball-room, sick at heart, and went directly to Kemnat's apartments, certain of finding him equally ill at ease. He was not mistaken: there sat the poor old man in his arm-chair, in tears. Kemnat started on hearing a footstep.

"Is that you, Eugenia?" he asked in hurried accents.

"It is I, Kemnat; you are anxious? God! what is it that hangs over us both? what can have happened to Eugenia; my beloved, my own worshipped Eugenia?"

"God only knows! but I am sure — my heart tells me — that she is not in this castle; nay, I do not know whether she even exists; that fiend Leonora von Luzelstein —"

"Hush, hush, for God's holy sake!" shrieked the lover, "you will make me mad; what can we do? the prince must be in danger. Eugenia too — I saw the triumph of that hated woman, as she gazed on the picture. Eugenia, Eugenia! where is she, Kemnat? Let us fly to seek her; but oh! God! whisper not the possibility that she has fallen a victim to Leonora's jealousy and our neglect!"

Raffaello rushed from the apartment. He seized a torch, and ran through all the dismal vaults and passages of the castle. He saw nothing, he heard nothing, but half-frantic terror urged him on.

Now there was a particular passage that communicated with the Carmelite monastery beneath ; desperation seemed to tell him that it had something to do with the fate of Eugenia. He hurried on, until the low-arched door of entrance to another passage intercepted him. He raised a stone, that was near, and knocked furiously against the door. It suddenly opened from within, and enclosed him ; but it was shut as instantly.

Poor Raffaello ! he had indeed followed Eugenia.

The castle bell tolled the hour of midnight. The ball was over ; and without the castle all was, or seemed to be, at rest. The watchers in the towers occasionally told the hour, and said that all was well ; but no other sound, unless, indeed, the ominous night-bird ventured to break the sacred spell of silence, intruded on the listening ear.

Kemnat, exhausted by his exertions, his terrors, and his anxieties, had sunk almost insensible. Prince Frederick, entirely overcome, slept heavily on his couch. His brother, the elector, slumbered soundly in the old chamber of Count Ruprecht. The two Gemmingens sat waking and watchful by the side of Frederick.

At one o'clock the conspirators had agreed to meet, for the consummation of their base and impious plot. The Countess von Luzelstein taking the lead in the conspiracy, and defying Heaven as she courted crime, appeared disguised as the Virgin Mary herself, and entered the chamber of the sleeping Louis.

" Louis, Louis, Louis ! " said she, in sonorous tones.

Poor Louis, in his dream, thought he heard the voice of his deceased wife, and he tremblingly raised his head from the pillow.

" Margaret, my own Margaret ! " exclaimed he, still imperfectly awake.

" Wake, Louis, and look at me," continued the same deep-toned voice.

The elector turned his eyes towards the centre of the room ; a lamp was burning on a pedestal near the couch : as soon as he perceived the phantom, he exclaimed, —

" Great God ! who or what art thou ? "

"Fear nothing, my son ! The mother of the Saviour brings a blessing for thee and thine, and the assurance of thy soul's salvation."

The elector shuddered as he listened to this answer ; he joined his hands together ; but what was his horror, when the impious blasphemer proceeded to denounce his beloved brother as a heretic, separated from the church, doomed to everlasting destruction, and hourly occupied in conspiracies against his life ?

Notwithstanding the phosphoric glory that surrounded the head of the Virgin, and the appalling conviction that she was indeed present to him, Louis's affection for his brother triumphed over every thing ; and he proceeded to defend him against the accusations he had just heard.

"Incredulous and obstinate !" said the spirit. "Do you then refuse to believe my words ? Learn then, that descending just now with my divine escort of holy angels, I found the Prince of Darkness with thy abhorred brother. My sudden appearance, and the sight of the celestial spirits, took from him the possibility of flight. There he is chained by my command, and gnawing his fetters. Approach thou King of Hell, thou thirsty lion, thou dragon, drunk with the blood of souls, thou who art nourished by the poison of sin, eternally damned — appear !"

Immediately on this a horrible noise of chains came from the anti-chamber, the door swung upon its hinges, as if a tempest had worked it, and a dreadful roaring, like that of a lion, announced the arrival of the monster.

As soon as the Carmelite superior had entered under the disguise of Satan, of whose worst imagined attributes he might be considered an exaggeration, he precipitated himself before the Virgin, groaning and crawling ; and she placed her foot upon the head of the demon.

At this fearful sight, the deluded elector began to tremble in all his limbs, his hair stood an end, he clasped his hands together, sprang from his bed, and fell prostrate on the floor. The well-acted apparition now redoubled her terrifying denunciations, and in depriving him of the little reason that was left him, obtained his consent to the sacrifice of his brother.

The unfortunate and overwhelmed elector sank into insensibility. The perfidious couple took advantage of the moment,

to quit the chamber ; and two knights, armed cap-à-pie, replaced them immediately.

Their armour was black and brilliant with stars of fire, and poignards were in their hands. After recovering the elector from his swoon, they declared themselves ambassadors of the Holy Secret Tribunal, which had despatched them to the court of the palatinate, with orders to him to yield his brother to them; taking care in all this, to make their discourse agree with that of the pretended Virgin ; and as soon as the prince was sufficiently recovered, they obliged him to lead them towards Frederick.

In his impatience, the monk had most unnecessarily gone before them ; and he listened anxiously at the door of the prince's apartment. Emboldened by the silence of the place, he softly opened it, by the aid of false keys. He then looked round the room with uneasiness, but the sight of Frederick asleep tranquillized him, and his heart already began to bound with joy, on perceiving that success was as easy as it was certain. But this premature self-congratulation was somewhat checked, on perceiving a slight movement in one of the corners of the room. It was that in which young Otho sat. But he did not happen to be asleep when the devil was pleased to enter the chamber ; and the satanic pageant at first strangely surprised him. He thought, however, that he observed a great degree of hesitation in the manner of entering, and that afterwards the demon seemed to acquire more assurance. This looked more like a trick of this world than of the lower one ; and urged on, either by reasoning or the impulse of natural courage, young Otho darted from his concealment, sword in hand.

The father confessor, who immediately recognised the young guardian of the prince, thought it expedient to make all possible use of his disguise, in order to intimidate Gemmingen, while he at the same time brandished a poniard.

The instant that Otho saw the weapon, the masquerade ceased to terrify him. He leaped upon the assassin with the whole weight of his body. The monk, inconvenienced by his infernal accoutrements, was thrown down by the shock. He then had recourse to all such bellowings, hissings, and contortions, as he conceived appropriate and becoming in a devil, but a blow from the sword of Gemmingen cleft his head in twain.

"Die, villain!" exclaimed the intrepid Otho. At this moment, the prince, and Albert von Gemmingen, awakened from their profound sleep, and springing forward, gave the alarm, with loud and simultaneous cries for help.

At this very moment the elector advanced, escorted by the two chevaliers. The two latter, hearing the tumult, conceived that they had been betrayed, and fled precipitately down the spiral staircase into the vestibule, and away, by the secret passage to the monastery.

Louis remained alone; but frozen statue-like with horror, he still stood at the open door, pale, disfigured, his lamp in his hand, and altogether the most fearful spectre that had yet presented itself.

Frederick and his friends were transfixed at this sad and still inexplicable sight; they could not speak, but they stared inquiringly at each other.

During this pause, the physical strength of the elector, exhausted by so many trials, left him once more, and he fell senseless at the feet of his brother. All thought him dead; the castle was in instant confusion. But the elector's dreadful situation was the thing to be first cared for. They recovered him once more; but the shock seemed to have done its worst. He was in the most frightful agitation; and it was not till the morning was far advanced, that they succeeded in calming him. He then only remembered the horrible visions of the night. Daylight gave conviction to the terrified and credulous household; and all who could be spared from the sick chamber, were anxious to join in the search for the Virgin Mary and the two ambassadors!

The Countess von Luzelstein had left the town of Heidelberg in a close carriage before day-break, and the two stranger knights were no where to be seen. The dead body of the would-be devil explained the untoward personality, connected with the discarded father confessor; and poor Louis shuddered and wept, as he saw how narrowly his beloved brother had escaped becoming the victim of a detestable plot. He loved him, if possible, the more; but the shock on Louis's health was fatal. His fever returned in full force.

Kemnat had been soon roused, and was forward all night amongst the most zealous of the searchers; and when Prince Frederick heard from the sobbing old man the mysterious dis-

appearance of Eugenia, and then again the prolonged absence of Raffaello, who had sworn to find her or expire in the attempt, the whole vigour of his manly nature returned, and he rushed on to take the lead in the general search.

One of the first proceedings was to procure a legal document, to authorise the search of the Carmelite monastery. Several remarkable keys were found concealed in different parts of the confessor's attire ; and each appeared of importance, as every key had a separate place assigned it ; so that hurry or trepidation might not create confusion. "The devil," quaintly remarks the legend, "had been very discreet and consistent in every precautionary detail ; but he should not have peeped into Prince Frederick's sleeping-room, where he was not wanted."

As the prince and his formidable cortège made their appearance at the door of the monastery, surrounded by the indignant populace, and presented the order to the monk who received them, to give up all keys, and with them the possession of the chart and architectural plans of the monastery, with all its secret vaults and passages, the brother looked very much perplexed ; he declared that the articles which the prince demanded were not in the power of any monk to procure for him, for that they were locked up in the private sanctuary of the superior.

"That is enough," replied the prince, "we merely wished to know where to find them. Officers, do your duty ; forward, Kemnat, with the keys !"

To the astonishment of the monks, who had crowded to the vestibule, a band of soldiers entered the monastery, defiling the mock sanctity of its unholy walls, filing off in all directions, and one detachment, stronger than the rest, following old Kemnat directly to the apartments of the superior. Prince Frederick now beckoned to some servants who were carrying a sort of litter. "Bring in the body, and let it be placed in the chapel. The holy brotherhood must learn why we pronounce them from this hour removed from our dominions."

A shout of wild approbation burst from the multitude, to whom the Carmelite brethren were extremely odious. The dead body of the superior, in the costume he had adopted as his last, was now uncovered in the sight of the enraged people, and delivered over to the scandalized brethren, who carried it into the monastery.

"Down with the old black walls;—away with them," shouted the people.

"Not so fast, my good friends," said the prince, in his most commanding tone and manner. "We do not bear the sword in vain; justice will be done on the offenders, but no violence."

At this moment old Kemnat re-appeared, handing to his prince the important chart, numerous other keys, and various papers.

Thus provided, Frederick rushed once more forward. The monks scowled on him as he passed; and Kemnat momentarily expected to see a dagger glide from beneath some cowl. So he moved on immediately behind the prince, and the Von Gemmingens were on either side of him.

Frederick studied the chart, as he proceeded along the principal aisle of the building; he knew enough of architectural intricacies to be a good guide on the present occasion. He went over the whole of the monastery for mere form's sake; for he never expected to find the objects of his search above ground. As a precaution, however, he left two soldiers in every apartment or corridor that he visited. And now he prepared to descend into the vaults and windings beneath.

He was much astonished to find that one of the secret passages beneath the Jettenbuhl, had a branch communication with the monastery. This explained, as with a beam of light, numerous mysterious proceedings of elder date, which could never be accounted for. It seemed also the ready clue to the fate of Eugenia, and perhaps Raffaello; young Hugo had declared that the Fraulein Eugenia had been left in the gallery the preceding day; and Kemnat's discovery of the evening's visitation to it, told the fate of the lovely girl too plainly. Still the fever of hope lighted up its false beacon in the mind of the wretched father. The prince was not so sanguine; the sneer of one monk, who seemed more strongly stamped with villany than the rest, made him tremble for the sweet girl, and her rash lover; and as he examined every darkened cell, he expected to encounter some shocking confirmation of his fears. "Lead on to the right!" suddenly exclaimed the prince to the torch bearers. They turned in upon a dark and narrow passage; and after a few paces paused.

"We cannot proceed further, your highness."

The prince hurried forward, and perceived a newly built arch across the passage, half formed, and hastily stopped with stones and rubbish. — "Forward there, with the axes!"

Kemnat! groaned — the prince placed his hand upon his breast, and leaned against the damp wall.

The obstruction was soon removed; and the party hastened on to the end of the passage, where they were met — by a strong door!

"The keys!" Young Gemmingen took them from the hands of the trembling father, whose eyes wildly glared upon the door, the opening of which was to wither his old heart.

After many fruitless attempts to fix upon the right key, the door at length slowly receded; every one caught the panic — "Shall we enter?" asked the torch bearers.

Frederick, certain of meeting with the worst evidence of unfair treatment to one or other of his friends, seized the nearest torch himself, and stepped hastily into the small chamber; the torch flickered, and he stood an instant within the door, before he could discern any object. At length, however, his eyes rested on something like a projecting altar, with a figure lying upon it. It might be a tomb, an effigy; he hushed his apprehensions with this rapid conjecture, and cautiously approached the pale corpse that was resting there in Death's own sleep! It was too much like the lovely creature it had been, in its serene and perfectly exquisite expression, not to be instantly recognized.

"Oh God! Eugenia!" ejaculated the prince, and throwing down the torch, he burst into passionate tears and clasped the cold burthen to his breast. A shriek of horror and despair announced the fearful certainty: — but an old man laughed hysterically, and rushed through the group that was crowding into the apartment. —

"Ha, ha, ha! she is mine, give her to me; it is my child; I will have her, you shall not hold me; devil and fiends of hell, don't mock an aged man!" — And with these hideous words, and more hideous laughing and shouting, old Kemnat attempted to seize the corpse, and fell in strong convulsions at the prince's feet.

Frederick recovered his presence of mind instantly; and ordering the parent to be carried quickly into the open air, he himself took up in his arms all that was mortal of a thing divine.

We must imagine the rage of the citizens when the melancholy truth came into open day. The people and the soldiers could scarcely be restrained from tearing the edifice down, and maltreating the monks. These, however, were ordered to secure their doors, and to remain within them until the pleasure of the elector should be made known to them.

On ascending by the northern entrance, they were met by a group of soldiers, running at full speed: — "They have escaped, they have escaped; the Counts of Luzelstein have escaped by the mountain."

"Good God, what is this?" exclaimed the prince.

"We were on duty near the terrace on the east; and suddenly two figures, dreadful to look at, rose from the ground, like evil spirits; we were all terrified; but as soon as they perceived us, they sprang towards us, and striking to the right and left with battle-axes, they forced their way through the guard, and we then saw that they were the two knights of the Secret Tribunal that his highness saw last night."

"Cowards!" impatiently exclaimed Frederick, — "forward to the pursuit, my brave fellows," said he, addressing his immediate followers; and leaving the sad servants to carry the two litters, the soldiers, and the prince at their head, rushed with lightning speed up to the northern gate.

It is useless to tell that the two counts had found themselves detained in the monastery passage, for want of the keys; and that they chose a favourable moment for their escape; moreover, they effected it, for the prince returned from a vain pursuit. His anxiety respecting the still undecided fate of Raffaello perhaps reconciled him to deferring the punishment he meant to inflict.

The secret passage was, of course, searched; and the door, at which poor Raffaello had knocked so furiously, and which had seemed to open its jaws and swallow him alive, now gave up the dead; for the first thing that the guide stumbled against, was the murdered Italian!

He and the beautiful Eugenia were united in death, if they could not be so in life; one tomb contained them, and was ever afterwards called the 'Lover's Grave.' Old Kemnat never completely recovered his senses; but he wandered about harmlessly, and would sit whole days by the side of his child's monument, declaring that he was waiting to see it change

into the angel of the resurrection. The good elector breathed his last shortly after the interment of the lovers ; and the castle was long a scene of woe. The Carmelites were driven out, and the castle of Luzelstein levelled with the ground, the two counts having perished in the bursting of a mine beneath the tower which they defended.

Victory, however, called upon her favourite son ; and Frederick hastened to forget his sorrows, in taking the command of the confederate German troops, to oppose an invasion of the Turks.

THE END.

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